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Home Extensions

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PLUS! Best Ways to Add Space to a Period Property

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Timber Frame Costs

Wood Fibre Insulation: The Next Big Thing?

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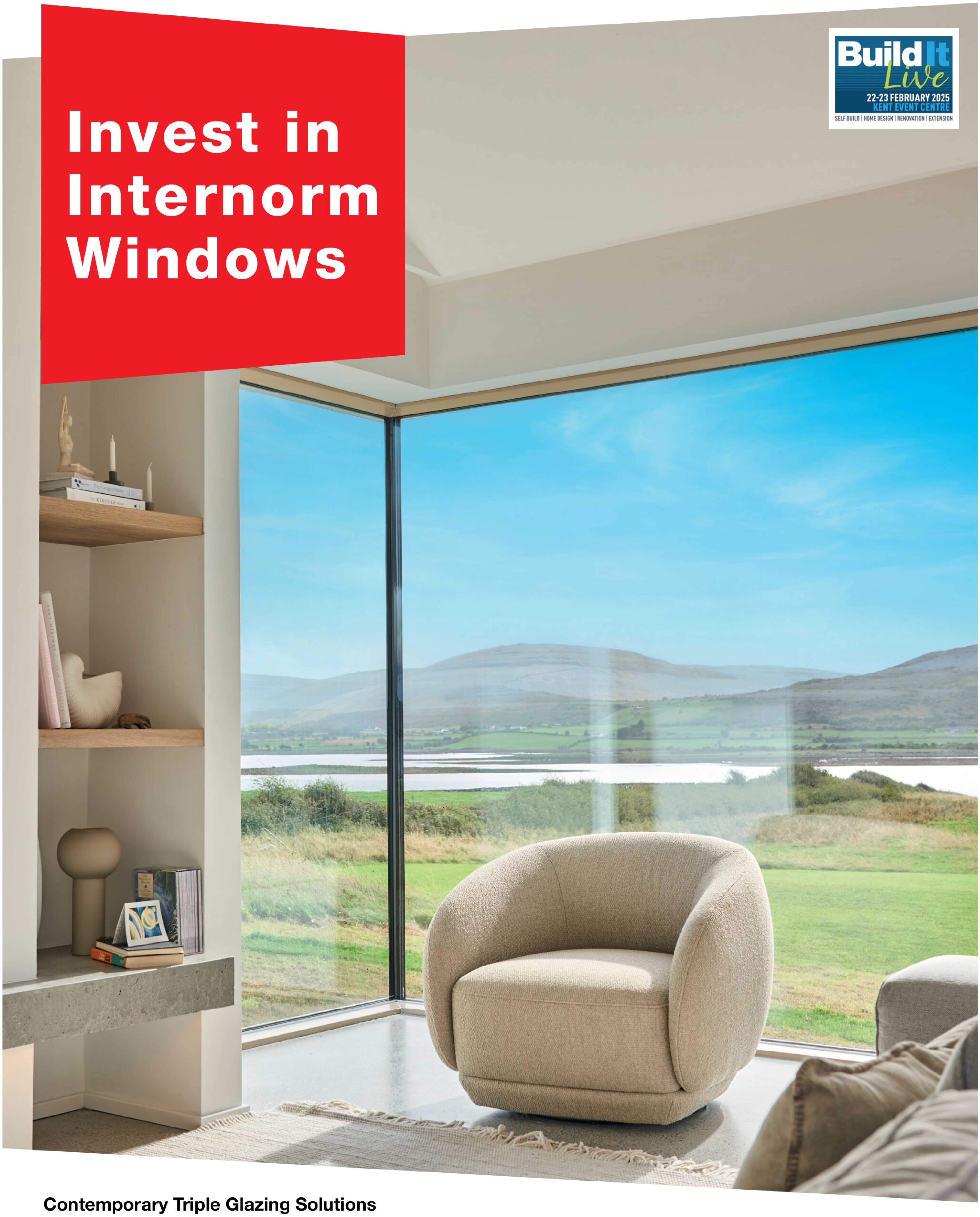

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Welcome

The March edition of Build It magazine is the first to officially land in the new year... so it's a good time to go back to basics and explore what you need to know if you're going to take the next step towards creating your dream home in 2025. So, we asked self builder and pro project manager, Mark Stevenson, to share his thoughts on how to approach the process – and what's set to change in construction over the coming year. Check out his must-read guide on page 56.

You can meet Mark and our incredible team of Build It experts at the Build It Live shows. Our first 2025 event takes place on 22nd & 23rd February at the Kent Event Centre. It's an amazing opportunity to meet suppliers, experience products and materials in person and gain access to £100s worth of one-to-one advice from experienced hands – and you can access all of that totally free by claiming your ticket offer on page 98! If you can't make this one, then be sure to earmark 7th & 8th June for our Bicester event, and 13th & 14th September for Exeter.

Back to this issue, and we've curated a raft of ideas and advice to help you move your project forward. Build It's features writer, Erika Chaffey, has masterminded our Package Home Bible, an in-depth look at how design and build specialist companies can support your dream home journey – including supplier profiles to help you identify the right fit for your project.

On top of that, we've got invaluable guides on how to achieve an individual design that delivers wow factor at an achievable cost (page 82), the best ways to frame views (page 65), why you should consider wood fibre insulation for your project (page 70), great ideas for extending a listed building (page 76), understanding timber frame costs (page 93) and much more besides. Plus, don't miss the chance to learn from our inspiring real-life reader homes (page 25) and explore some amazing ICF builds (page 19).

Chris

CHRIS BATESMITH, CONTENT DIRECTOR

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STARTING YOUR SELF BUILD IN 2025

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EXTENSION IDEAS FOR LISTED BUILDINGS

COVER IMAGE: RICK & JULIE ANDERSON'S STUNNING BARN-STYLE SELF BUILD IN KENT (PAGE 26). PHOTO: KATHERINE MALONDA

MEET THE TEAM

SANDER TEL is Build It's digital features editor. Alongside putting together inspiring content at www.self-build.co.uk, on page 19 he's sharing a selection of inspiring ICF homes.

ERIKA CHAFFEY is Build It's features writer. This month she's exploring how to ensure a successful outbuilding project (page 62) and the best solutions for framing views (page 65).

SCARLETT DEAMER is Build It's editorial assistant. From page 9, she's sourcing the latest news, products and materials; while on page 76 she's showcasing a range of listed building extensions.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS is Build It's sustainability expert. On page 70, he's investigating the benefits of wood fibre insulation and over on page 88 he looks at insulating suspended floors.

JULIAN OWEN is Build It's design doctor and a self build architect with his own practice. See page 82 where he reveals how to develop an achievable house design with plenty of character.

JULIA RIDDLE is a planning consultant with a wealth of experience in self and custom build housing. Discover the ins and outs of permitted development rights with her guide on page 100.

OPINDER LIDDAR is a Build It Award-winning architect, director of Lapd Architects and designer of Build It's Self Build Education House. Find out more at self-build.co.uk/ourhouse

MARTIN GAINE is a former council case officer turned independent planning consultant. He is a regular expert at Build It Live. Read his planning guides at self-build.co.uk/martin

ALAN TIERNEY is a historic buildings expert and conservation specialist. This month, he's sharing the inside track on the importance of structural surveys for older properties (page 96).

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As part of our sustainability commitments, Build It magazine is made of material from well-managed forests and other controlled sources.

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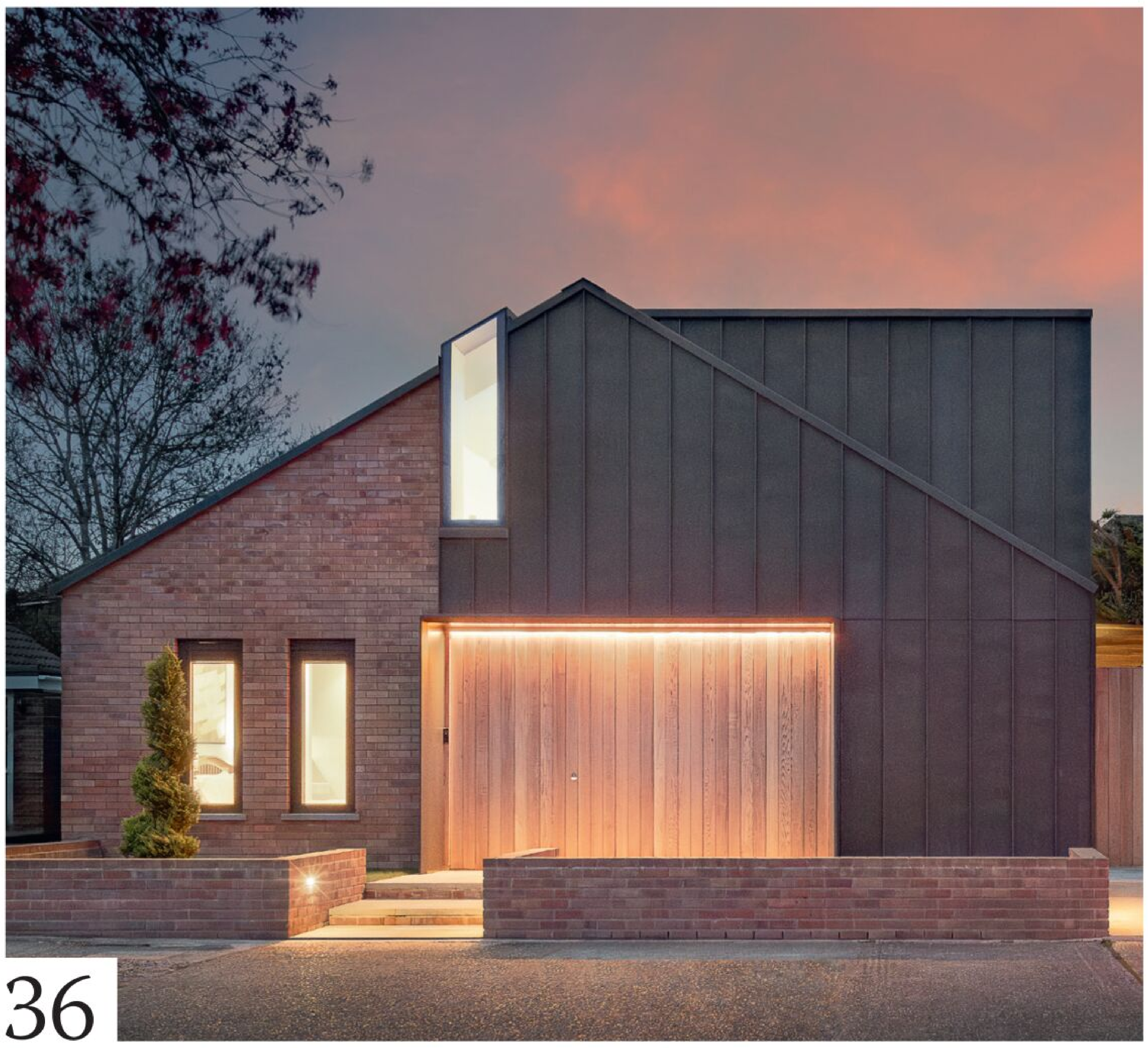
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REAL-LIFE HOMES

COVER STORY **Fantastic ICF homes** 19

Sander Tel looks at some of the best ICF properties that demonstrate the breathtaking possibilities of this innovative structural system, to inspire your project

COVER STORY **Home to roost** 26

Situated on the site of a former chicken shed, self builders Rick and Julie Anderson have created an impressive house that puts a sleek, modern twist on a traditional aesthetic

COVER STORY **Modern intervention** 36

Seasoned renovator Darren Young took on a new challenge transforming a modest South London bungalow into his very own stunning, contemporary urban sanctuary

COVER STORY **Designed for living** 46

Rhodri and partner Meinir Jones converted their compact 1960s stone-built barn into a bright and airy family home, packed with plenty of rustic charm and character

RENOVATION & BUILDING

COVER STORY **Start your self build in 2025** 56

Mark Stevenson shares his top tips for planning, designing and constructing your dream home project this year

Garages & outbuildings 62

Explore how to add value and wow-factor to your property with these imaginative and practical examples

COVER STORY **Framing views** 65

Erika Chaffey guides you through some creative solutions to enhance your home's connection to the outdoors

COVER STORY **Wood fibre insulation** 70

Sustainability expert Nigel Griffiths discusses how this eco-friendly option could be the ideal fit for your build

COVER STORY **Extending a listed building** 76

A selection of inspiring additions that highlight the creative possibilities for upgrading an older property

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Architect Julian Owen explains the importance of developing an achievable plan for your self buid

Insulating suspended floors 88

Looking to improve your home's energy efficiency? Take a look at Nigel Griffith's guide to retrofitting floor insulation

COVER STORY **Timber frame costs** 93

Discover if this construction method is the right choice for you as we breakdown the factors that affect prices

Structural surveys 96

Alan Tierney investigates how important this stage of the journey is for creating a successful renovation project

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Unsure if your design ideas can be realised without a full planning application? Planning expert Julia Riddle explains what works fall under these unique building rights

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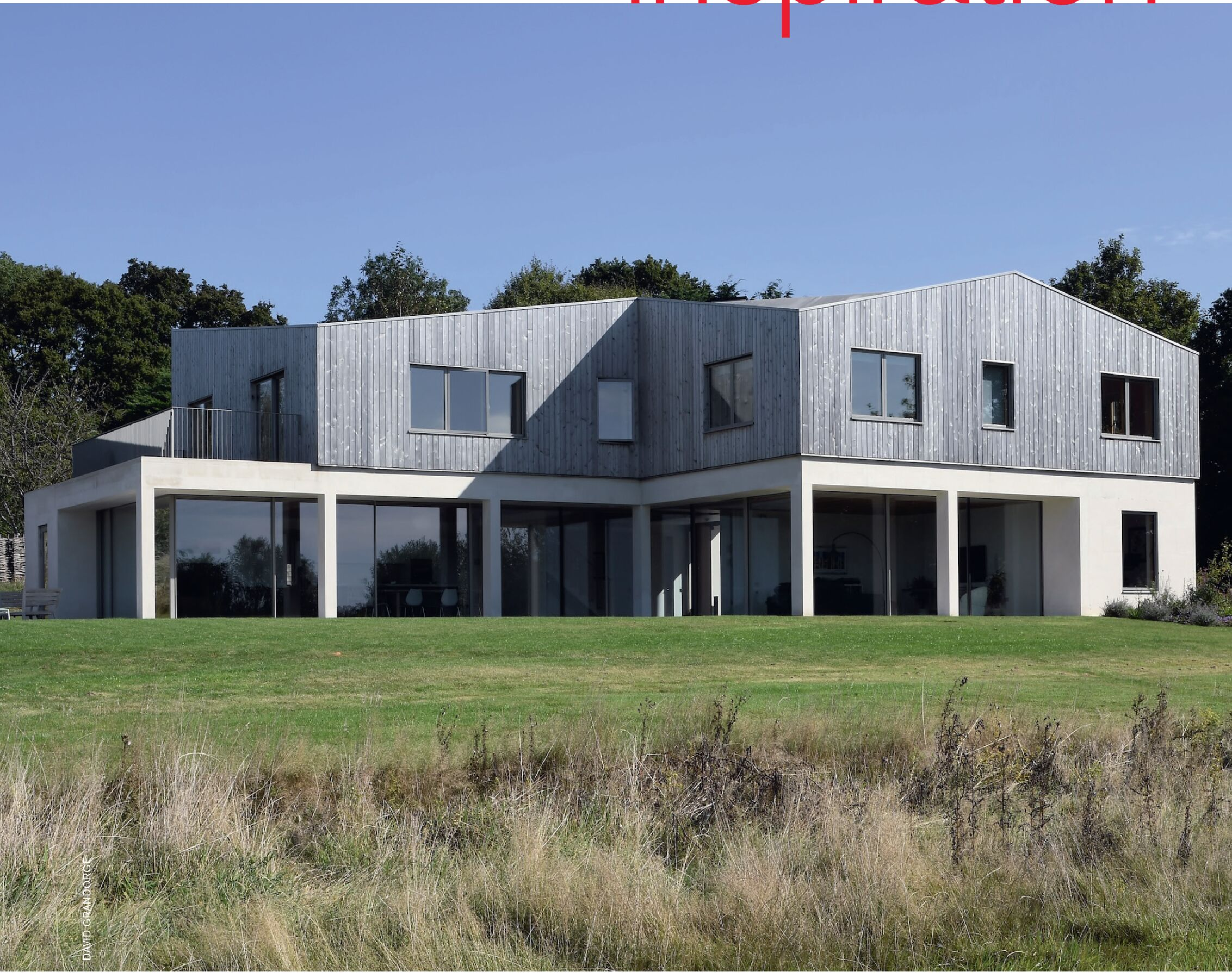

DAVID GRANDORGE

Elegant low-carbon family home

Wilkinson King Architects designed this unique, low-energy new build that capitalises on exceptional views of the South Downs. Field House replaces a small, poorly-constructed dwelling and several unsalvageable agricultural barns. The modern home is cleverly embedded into its rural context, adding a striking contemporary accent to the picturesque site.

The ground floor is composed of a large sitting room, featuring both snug and open-plan kitchen/living zones. Upstairs, four dual-aspect bedrooms have been arranged to take full advantage of the panoramic views. Natural materials such as Douglas fir, solid limestone and spruce cross laminated timber (CLT), create a warm, sophisticated interior colour palette for the entire property, allowing the vistas to take centre stage.

Cedar cladding was purposefully left untreated, to gently weather over time and bring a distinctive silver tone to the exterior. A series of structural limestone columns and beams are a main feature of the ground floor, forming a stunning stone loggia along the perimeter of the property. The undulating roof of subtle pitches echo the surrounding natural landscape and the pre-existing barns that delicately pepper the site.

A highly efficient building fabric and great airtightness levels reduce the energy requirements of the building. The residual demands are fulfilled by an air source heat pump and all power is supplied from renewable sources. The refined architectural composition, twinned with the focus on the build's environmental impact, make Field House an outstanding example of sustainable design.

To find out more call 07960 411988 or visit wilkinsonking.com

PROJECT OF THE MONTH

Hartley House

by THISS Studio

Nestled within Waltham Forest in London, Hartley House's ground floor has been transformed by THISS Studio, from a dark, cramped arrangement into a light and homely family kitchen. The new design for the Victorian terrace reconfigures the existing floor plan instead of adding a costly extension, unlocking the space already within the property.

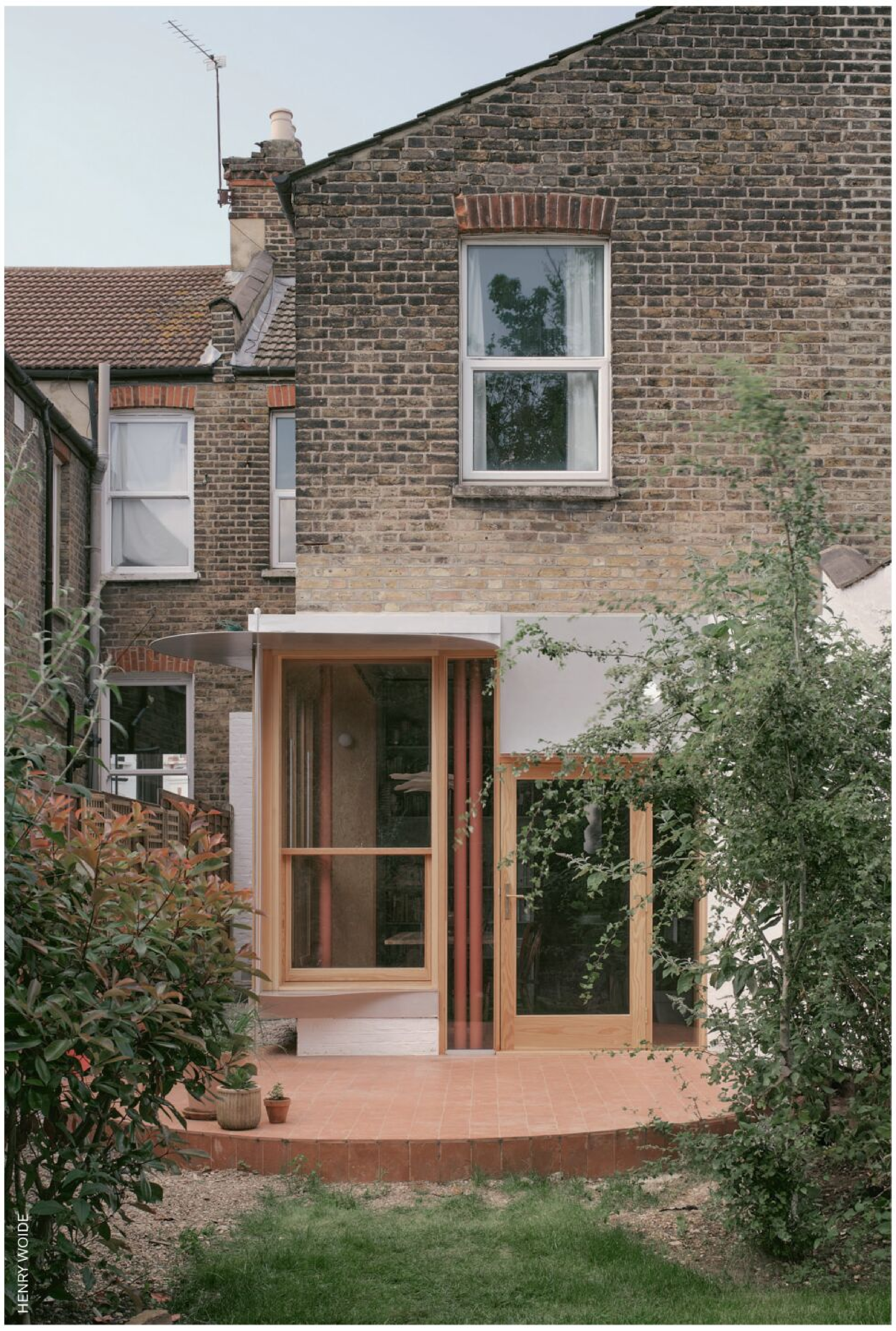
This unique retrofit involved opening up the back of the house to create a new open-plan kitchen-dining room. Steps down from the rest of the property delineate the area, while the new lower floor creates a level threshold to the garden, blending the two zones.

A cantilevered dining bench imaginatively utilises space from the outside. The bench is framed by three oversized Douglas fir timber sash windows, which draw natural light into the room. The wooden fenestration not only adds an interesting geometric style to the new area, but showcases a clever, cost effective and creative alternative to expensive panes of expansive glazing.

Internally, natural tones of wood, brick-reds and creams are skillfully layered to create a warm, cosy family space. Terracotta tiled flooring flows out from the kitchen, forming a circular garden patio, visually connecting the exterior and interior.

Outside, a curved recycled aluminium canopy projects outwards from the south facing windows to provide shade. The playful organic shape beautifully juxtaposes the vertical appearance of the rear elevation, adding both character and depth to the new addition.

For more information call 020 3089 6618 or visit thiss.studio


HENRY WOIDE

EPC ratings rise compared to 2024

Analysis from epIMS, the EPC and energy efficiency platform, shows that over the past 12 months, 60.2% of all homes sold, let or constructed in England and Wales held an EPC rating of C or above. These figures mark an increase of 1.6% on the previous year. However, chief operating officer of epIMS, Craig Cooper did stress that EPC ratings aren't necessarily reflective of how eco-friendly a home is. Air source heat pumps, for example, are a green heating option but score lower than gas boilers.

400%

is the amount some councils have been ordered to increase home building by to meet government objectives, according to figures from the BBC (bbc.co.uk). In total, 16 local authorities in England will need to have at least a five-fold increase to reach their new housing targets. Kensington and Chelsea have the most challenging target, which is nearly 22 times their average. The shift aims to help Labour meet its goal of constructing 1.5 million dwellings in the next five years.

Self build properties proposed in Suckley

An application has been lodged to Malvern Hills District Council for nine new self build homes. According to the planning documents, the scheme intends to offer high-quality, eco friendly, carbon-neutral and sustainable design, which reflects the local character of the area. Although the plans would aid housing demands in the area, the proposed development has been met with negative responses from some neighbours, who say the rural setting has already experienced an acceleration in construction projects.

What's on?

DIY & HOME MAINTENANCE

17TH-18TH FEB
£250, CROYDON

Learn the basic skills to help you take on most household tasks with this practical two-day course.

thebtc.co.uk

ASK AN ARCHITECT

22ND FEB
FREE, SWINDON

Book a no-obligation, 25-minute meeting with a RIBA-chartered architect to discuss your design ideas.

nsbrc.co.uk

BASIC TILING

27TH FEB
£90, LONDON

Gain the essential skills to safely and effectively carry out your own tiling for your self build project.

greatbritishwoodshop.co.uk

WINNING PLANNING PERMISSION

6TH MARCH
£40, VIRTUAL

Planning expert Julia Riddle guides you through how to get your project approved.

buildit.co.uk/training

INTRODUCTION TO GARDENING

8TH MARCH
£85, LONDON

Whatever the size or layout of your outdoor space, find out how you can create an eco-conscious garden.

walworthgarden.org.uk

RENEWABLES: HEAT PUMPS

28TH FEB
FREE, LONDON

Get to grips with heat pumps, including a cost-benefit analysis to help you decide if it's the right solution for your home.

cat.org.uk

Government to scrap 2035 ban on gas boilers

As part of its Future Homes Standard (FHS), Labour has announced plans to remove the proposed 2035 ban on the sale and installation of gas boilers in existing properties. The ban, already delayed by the previous government, had been introduced as a way of curbing the country's carbon footprint and fossil fuel reliance. Heat pump uptake has soared in recent times, thanks in part to the £7,500 grant support available under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, which has recently had its funding almost doubled, to £295m. However, it is still well below the rate required to make a ban feasible. While owners of existing houses will continue to be able to install gas boilers, it's expected the FHS will still mandate renewable forms of heating for new-build houses from 2026 onwards.

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need to know

Understanding the party wall process

A party wall is a shared wall, floor or structure that separates two properties. The term can refer to a structure within a building, such as a dividing wall between two terraced houses, or a boundary wall. This may include walls that are entirely situated on one owner's land, but serve to separate two properties and are shared by both owners.

Understanding party walls is important if you plan to undertake building works, such as constructing a wall on or up to the boundary line, cutting into or increasing the height or thickness of the party wall, and excavating within three to six meters of a neighbouring property if the excavation is deeper than the foundation of the adjoining building.

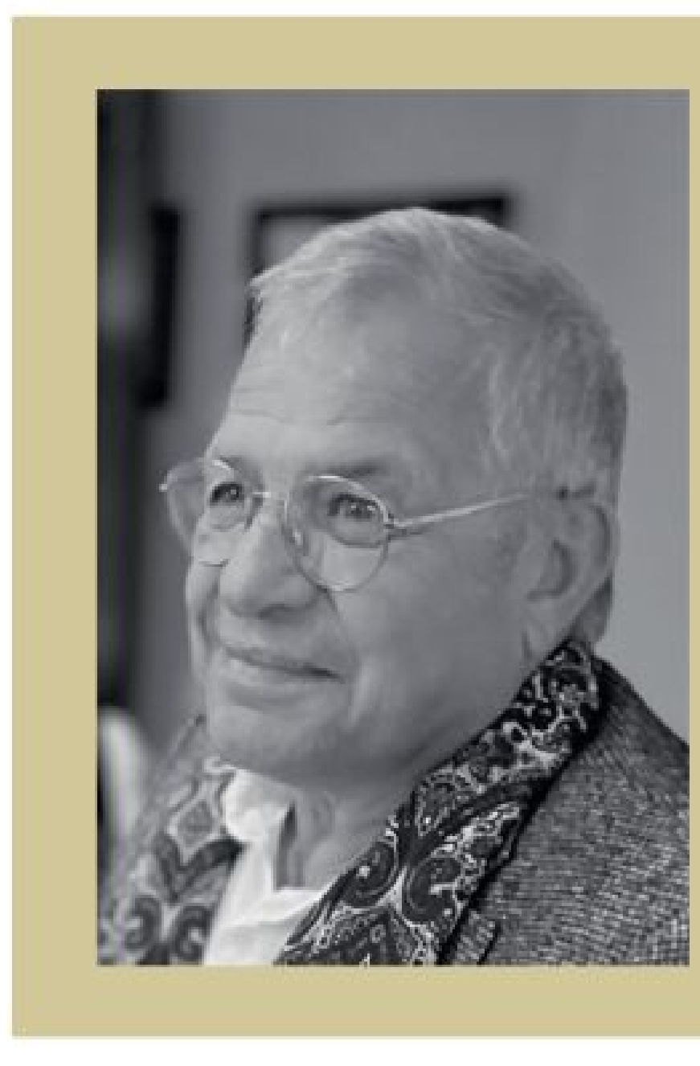
The Party Wall Act 1996 governs these situations in England and Wales to ensure that both the person conducting the work and the adjoining owner are protected. A party wall surveyor ensures compliance with the provisions of the Act. Their role includes preparing and serving party wall notices and assessing the impact of proposed works on neighbouring properties. They also prepare a party wall award, outlining the rights and responsibilities of both parties, and resolve any disputes related to the party wall or notifiable works.

The party wall process tends to follow this order. One to two months prior to starting any works, the building owner must serve notices that tell the adjoining owner(s) what they intend to construct. These neighbours can then consent, dissent or not respond, which is also treated at a dispute to the works. If a dispute arises both parties appoint a party wall surveyor or agree on an 'agreed surveyor' who would be obliged to act impartially. The surveyor(s) then prepares an award, which outlines the scope of the works, the condition and protections for the adjoining properties, and any other conditions. Work can then proceed as per the terms of the agreement. If consent to the notices has been given and the notice period is waived, then the work can start immediately.

You need to appoint a surveyor if your neighbour objects to a notice that you have served on them, you and your neighbour cannot agree on the proposed works or if you want any impartial advice on how to manage the process.

If your neighbour agrees to the work, you may not need a surveyor and can manage the process by creating a written agreement. However, if there's no agreement or a dispute arises, appointing a party wall surveyor is required to comply with legislation. You can't act as your own appointed surveyor.

As the self builder you would typically have to pay for the surveyor's fees. If someone disputes the intended works, then they have the right to appoint a surveyor at the building owner's expense. However, if both parties appoint separate surveyors, the costs may be split depending on the complexity and the nature of the works and the conduct of the parties.



ANDREW MURTOUGH

Andrew Murtough is the owner and director of ARM Property Services. Having worked in multi-disciplinary surveying practices since 1998, he has specialised in party wall matters in the residential, commercial and public sector for over 20 years. **armps.co.uk**

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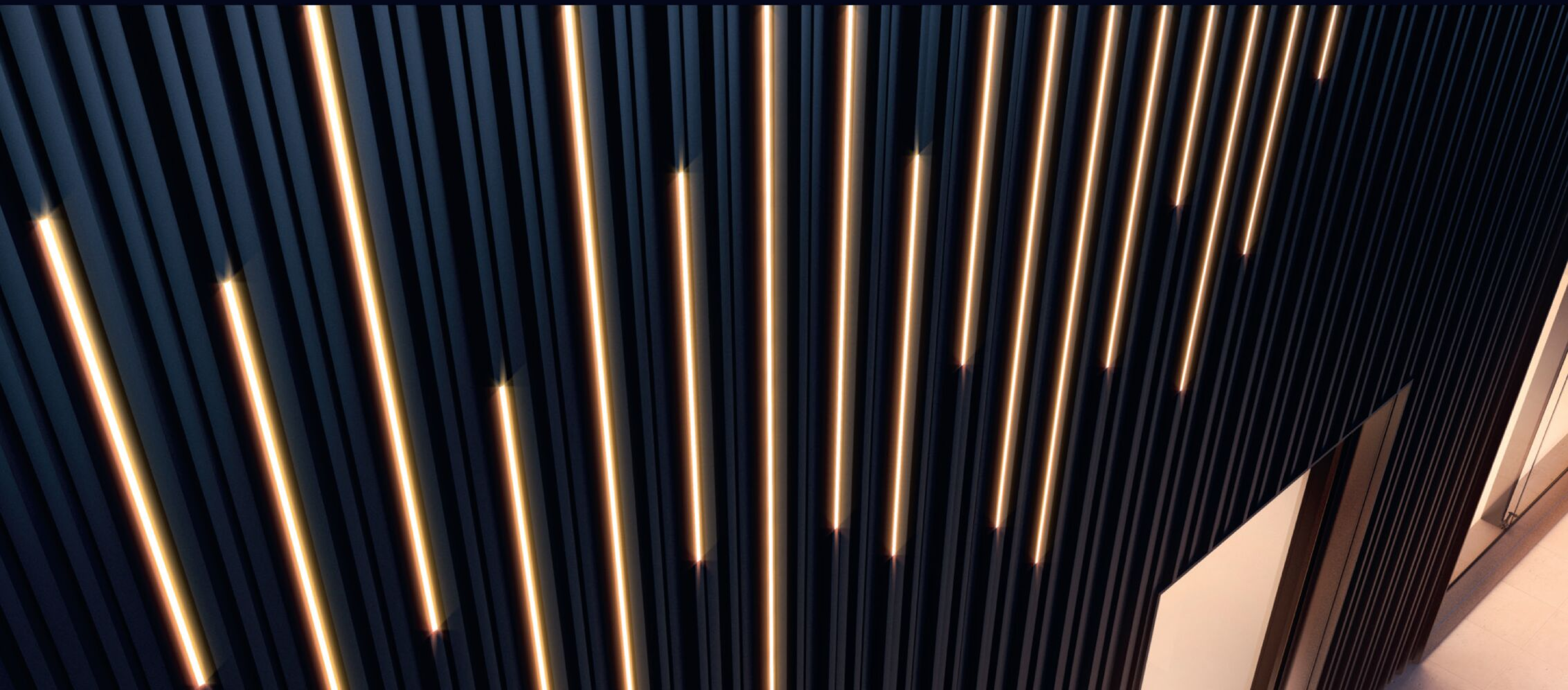

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Thanks to easy application, these panels are ideal for use on walls and ceilings, providing a stylish feature in your space. The lamella strips are mounted onto a recycled acoustic felt with a smooth laminate finish. Acupanel acoustic panels in slate grey 2,400mm x 600mm, £189.99, thewoodveneerhub.co.uk

£99.95

Wrapped in wood veneer with a clever interlocking edge, these panels are simple to install and maintain. The felt backing helps to soundproof your room while the neutral finish adds a cosy touch. Trepanel acoustic panels in ash grey 2,400mm x 600mm, £99.95, wallsandfloors.co.uk

product news

Great shopping ideas for your custom home project

ELEGANT HEATING

This sleek electric fireplace offers a 2kW output, making it a great room heater that can help achieve a cosy ambience. Available in three sizes, the effortless tapered firebox design can be quickly installed into existing fireplaces to elevate your decor. **Gazco eMotiv electric fireplace, from £795, stovax.com**

EFFICIENT GLAZING

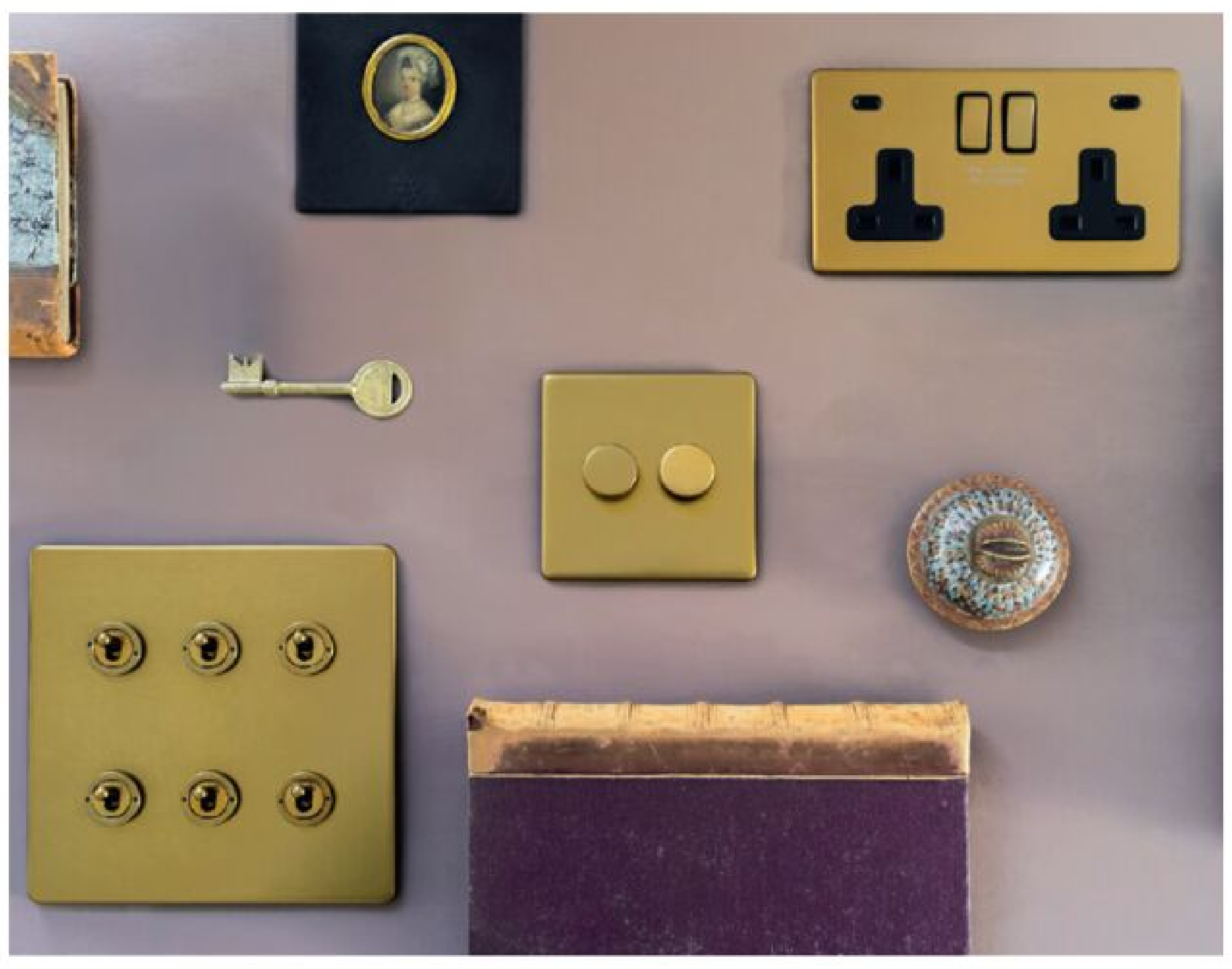
Weru's new sliding door system offers a space-saving solution for expansive glazing. With a low, flush threshold, burglar and acoustic protection, plus improved thermal insulation, the Alegra offers exceptional performance to help create enjoyable living spaces. **Weru Alegra sliding door, from £7,750, weru.uk**

HIGH-QUALITY SURFACES

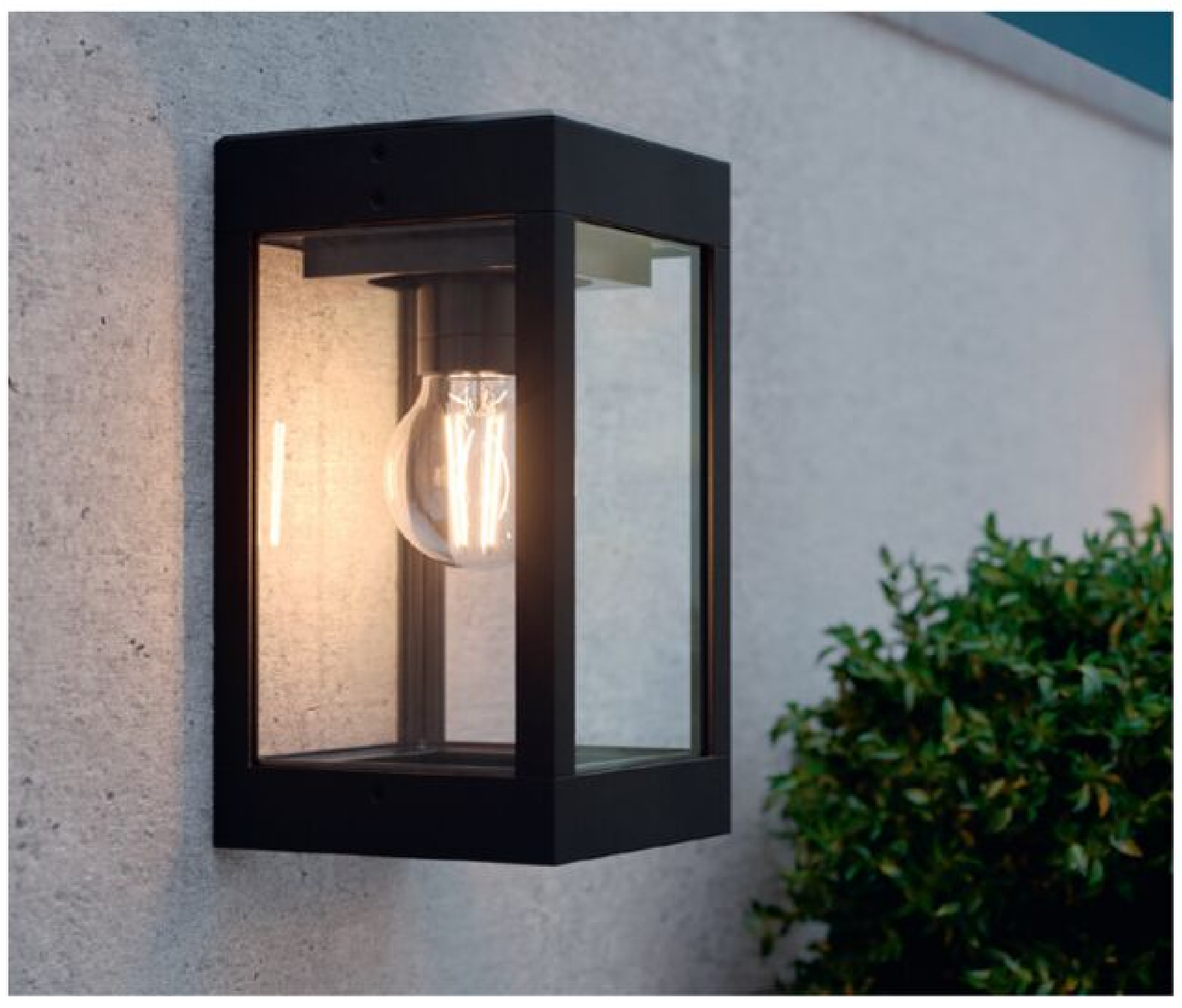
Inspired by quartzite from Brazil, this replica stone material can create a striking feature in your home. Crafted using carefully selected minerals, the surface is highly durable and won't fade in colour, making it suitable for use indoors and out. **KonigCeramic surface in Bruno Marmara, £632.40 per m², konigstone.co.uk**

LUXURY LIGHTING

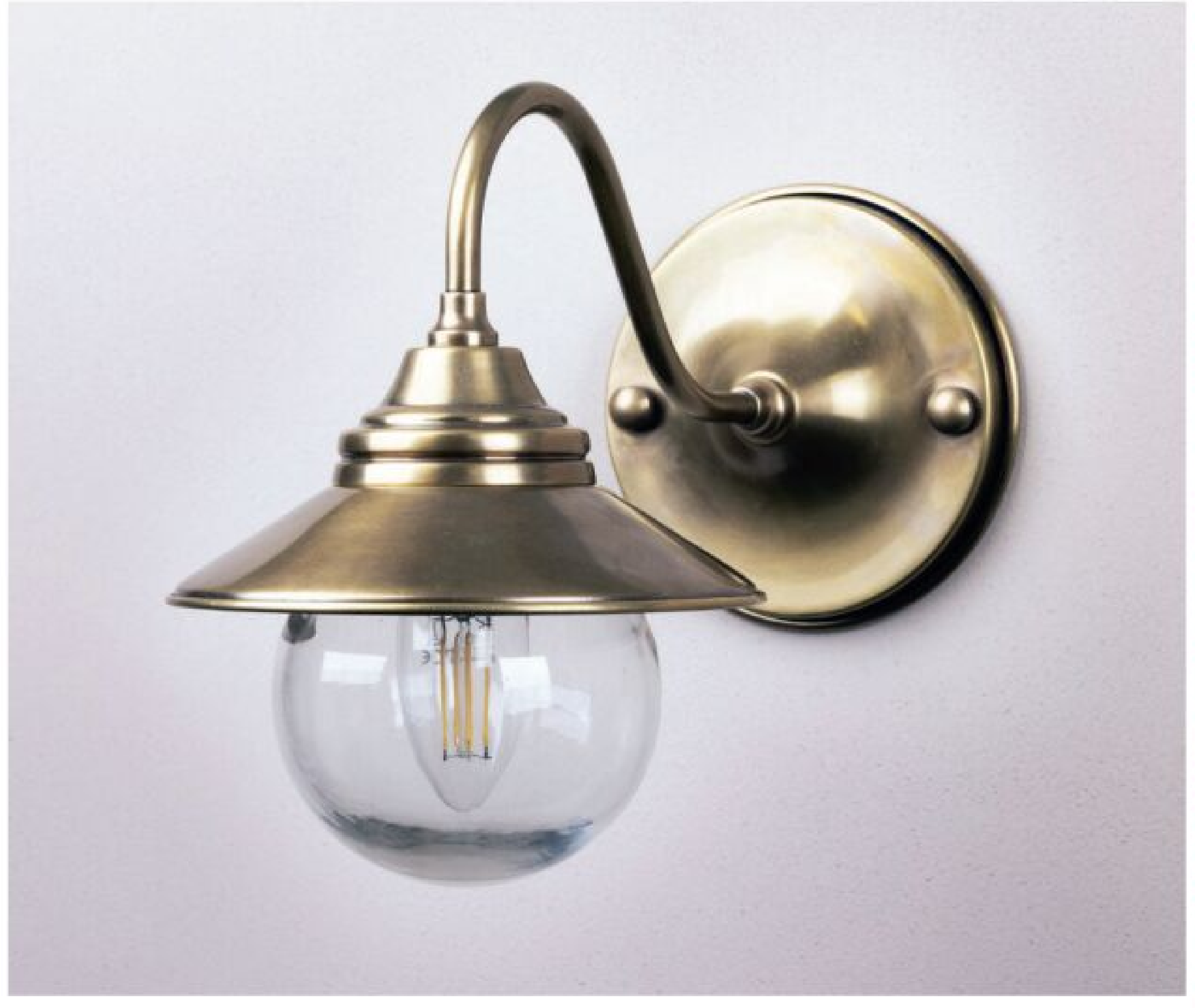
Soho Lighting's new Sloane collection of switches and sockets come in a lustrous antique gold reflective finish. The classic shade complements both contemporary and traditional designs, adding a striking accent to your interiors. **Soho Lighting Sloane collection in antique gold, from £38, soholighting.com**



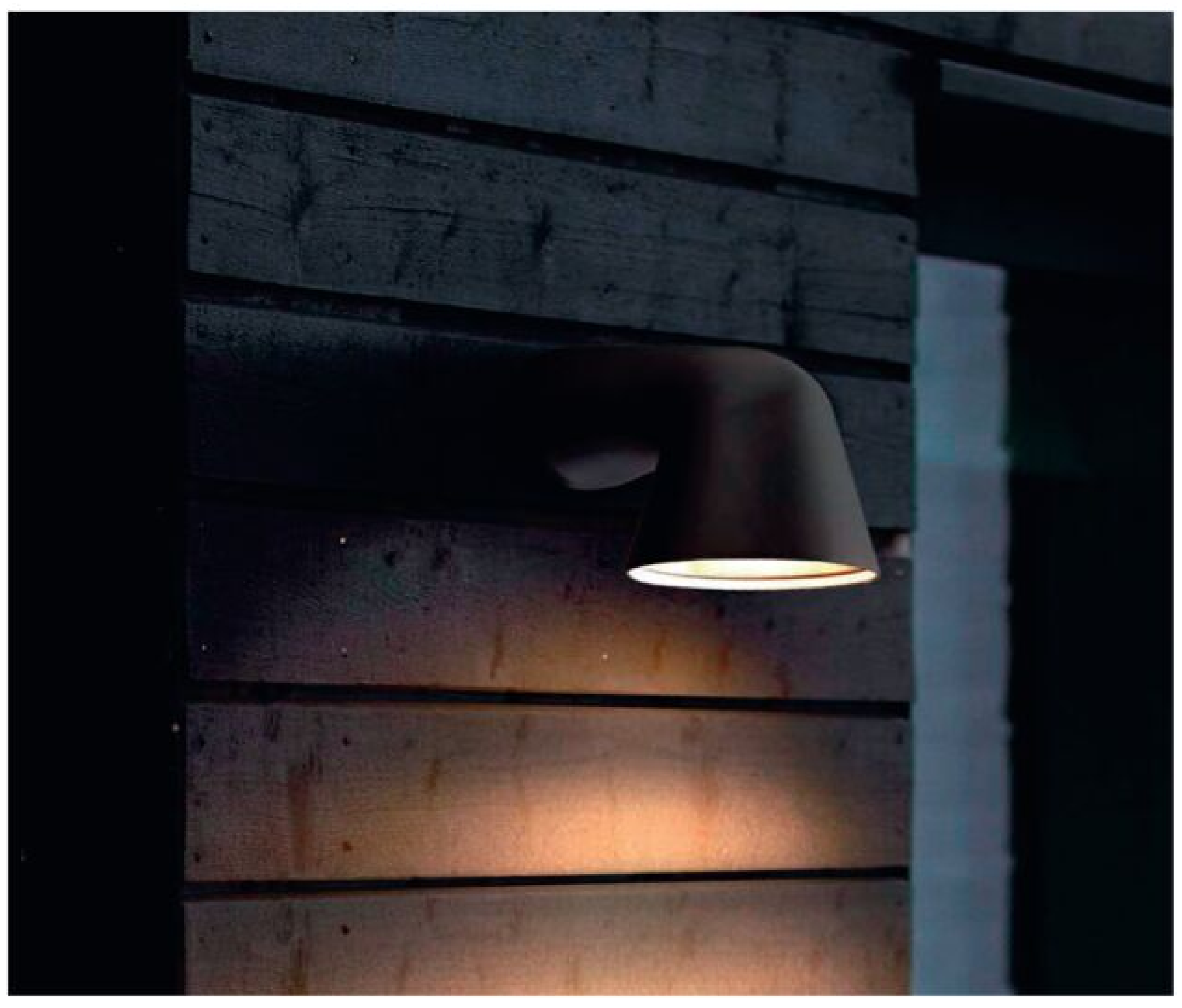
3 of the best EXTERIOR WALL LIGHTS



1 *Dorchester solar wall light,* **£49.99, thesolarcentre.co.uk**



2 *Alveston swan light in antique brass,* **£99.99, agriframes.co.uk**



3 *Nordlux outdoor wall light,* **£54.95, limelace.co.uk**

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interiors notebook

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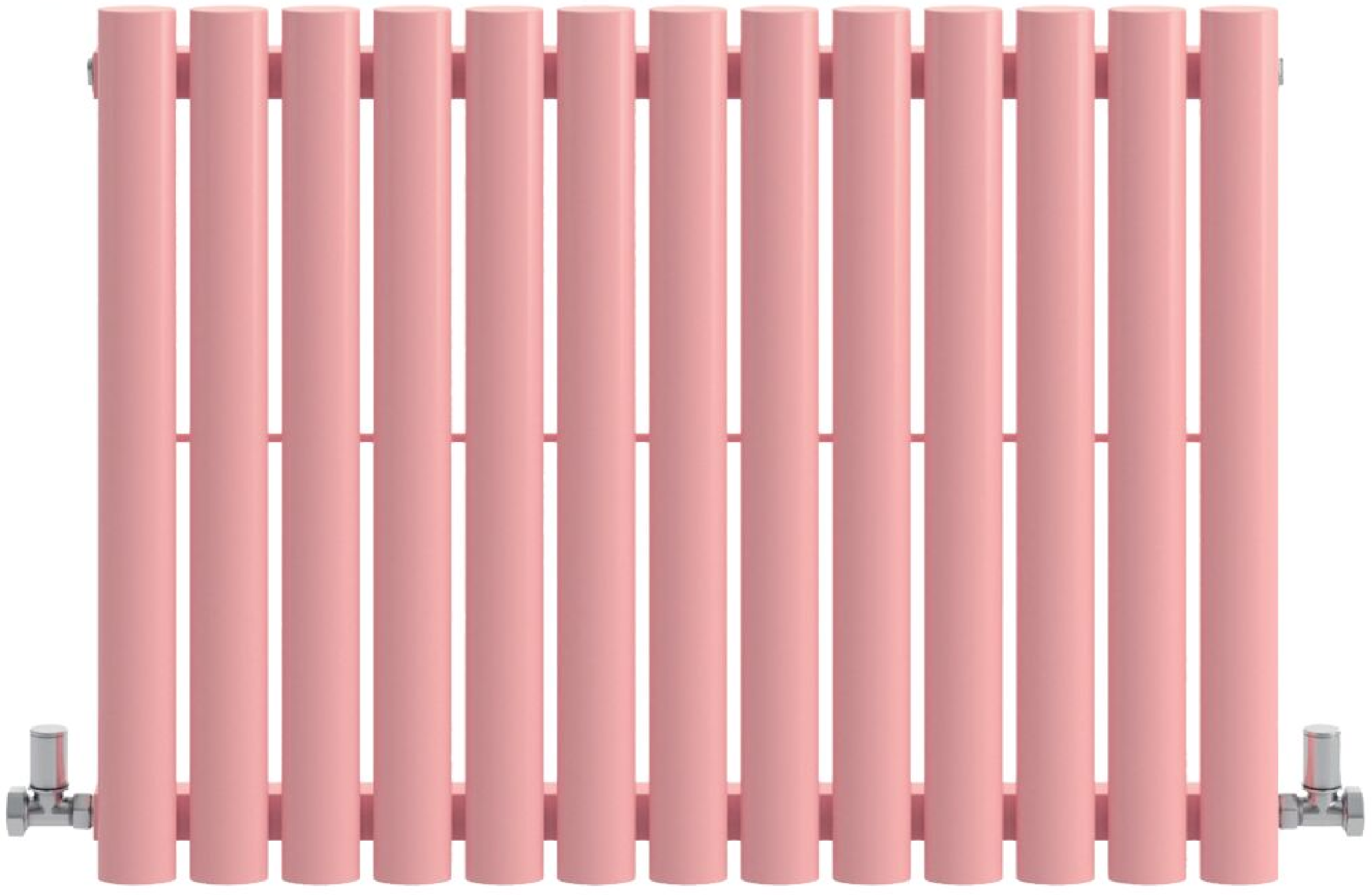

4

Shopping list

1 *This luxury, rosy pink linen daybed with oak frame provides the perfect comfy spot for your living space. Assembled for you at home, the delightful sofa pulls out to a spacious double bed, perfect for guests.* **Loaf Tip Top daybed with removable cover in pudding pink, £1,295, loaf.com**

2 *Inspired by traditional Japanese mosaics, these tiles create a welcoming space whether used in your kitchen or bathroom. The soft blush colouring is neutral enough to be used all-over or can create an eye-catching feature wall.* **Kit Kat tiles in dolce pink, £94.50 per m², porcelain superstore.co.uk**

3 *Give your interiors a sophisticated, sugary sweet character with this fun wall paint. The stunning shade is part of Craig & Roses's 1829 vintage collection, making it a timeless choice for your interior design project.* **Craig & Rose paint in rose pink, £45 for 2.5L, craigandrose.com**

4 *The dusty pink finish complements the slim framing of this bespoke kitchen. Plus, it's super durable, making it ideal for maintaining a fresh finish over time.* **LochAnna Kitchens Thistleton collection in porcelain and desert pink, from £5,114, lochanna kitchens.co.uk**

5 *Made from mild steel, this radiator's minimalist horizontal design pairs beautifully with the bold colour choice to add a striking feature to your interior design scheme.* **The Tap Factory single panel radiator in candy pink 550mm x 826mm, £369.99, tap warehouse.com**

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ASK OUR EXPERTS

TOP TIPS FINDING LAND
1. Finding plots is easy – being prepared to make the compromise is really hard
2. Don't fall in love with a particular style of house
3. Look out for replacement dwellings, garden grabs and brownfield land
4. Check your Local Authority planning website every week
5. Network, network, network and advertise
6. Pay a finders fee!
7. Search using maps
8. Contact businesses making planning applications
9. Stop looking at fields outside settlements
10. Look out for Custom build opportunities
Build It Live

Build It Live offers you firsthand experience of how products and materials look and feel, while connecting with experts to guide your specification choices for your project. If you are self building, renovating or have a home improvement in the pipeline, join Build It's knowledgeable team and hundreds of trusted suppliers. Take the next step in your journey towards your dream home at the event, which takes place at Kent Event Centre near Maidstone, on 22nd & 23rd February. Alongside the chance to explore 1,000s of products and materials, Build It Live offers free expert seminars, workshops and live demonstrations, designed to help you achieve project success. Here's a taster of what's in store:

Ask Our Experts

Build It's experts will be available all weekend to offer FREE, impartial advice on every aspect of your self build, renovation or extension – no sales pitch, just expert guidance! Don't miss this chance to benefit from the knowledge and experience of professional project managers, planners, architects, sustainability specialists, and more. Their independent advice could save you thousands in consultancy fees! Bring along your plans, ideas and questions – get there early to secure your one-on-one appointment.

FREE & IMPARTIAL
PROJECT ADVICE!

Build Cost Clinic

Looking to get a handle on budgeting for your self build, renovation, or extension project? Visit the Build Cost Clinic to book an initial consultation with a qualified and experienced estimator. They'll provide expert insights on the budget you need to bring your dream home to life. Using up-to-date materials and labour pricing, their advice will help you refine your design choices, better evaluate builders' quotes, and potentially save you money in the process!

Extensions Clinic

Get the answers you need to maximise your budget and add space, value and wow factor to your home at our dedicated Extensions Clinic. From planning advice to design inspiration, key specification choices and tips on getting the best value for your investment, our team of CIAT-certified architectural technologists is here to guide you. They'll help you navigate the home extension process and identify the best strategies to achieve your goals with confidence.

Heating Advice Clinic

Our expert-led Heating Advice Clinic will help you choose the most efficient and cost-effective heating system for your home. From gas boilers to heat pumps and eco-friendly woodburning stoves, get answers to all your heating questions and more.

Basement Advice Clinic

Building a basement is a smart, value-for-money way to add high-quality space without sacrificing your garden – or getting caught in planning restrictions. Visit our Basement Advice Clinic for impartial guidance on successfully building or converting a basement.

Land Zone

Powered by **PlotBrowser.com**, this is the place to be if you're looking to for land – in your preferred area. Explore a selection of one-off plots, conversion and renovation opportunities, gain access to the live PlotBrowser database and meet custom build developers who are enabling serviced plots for bespoke homes.

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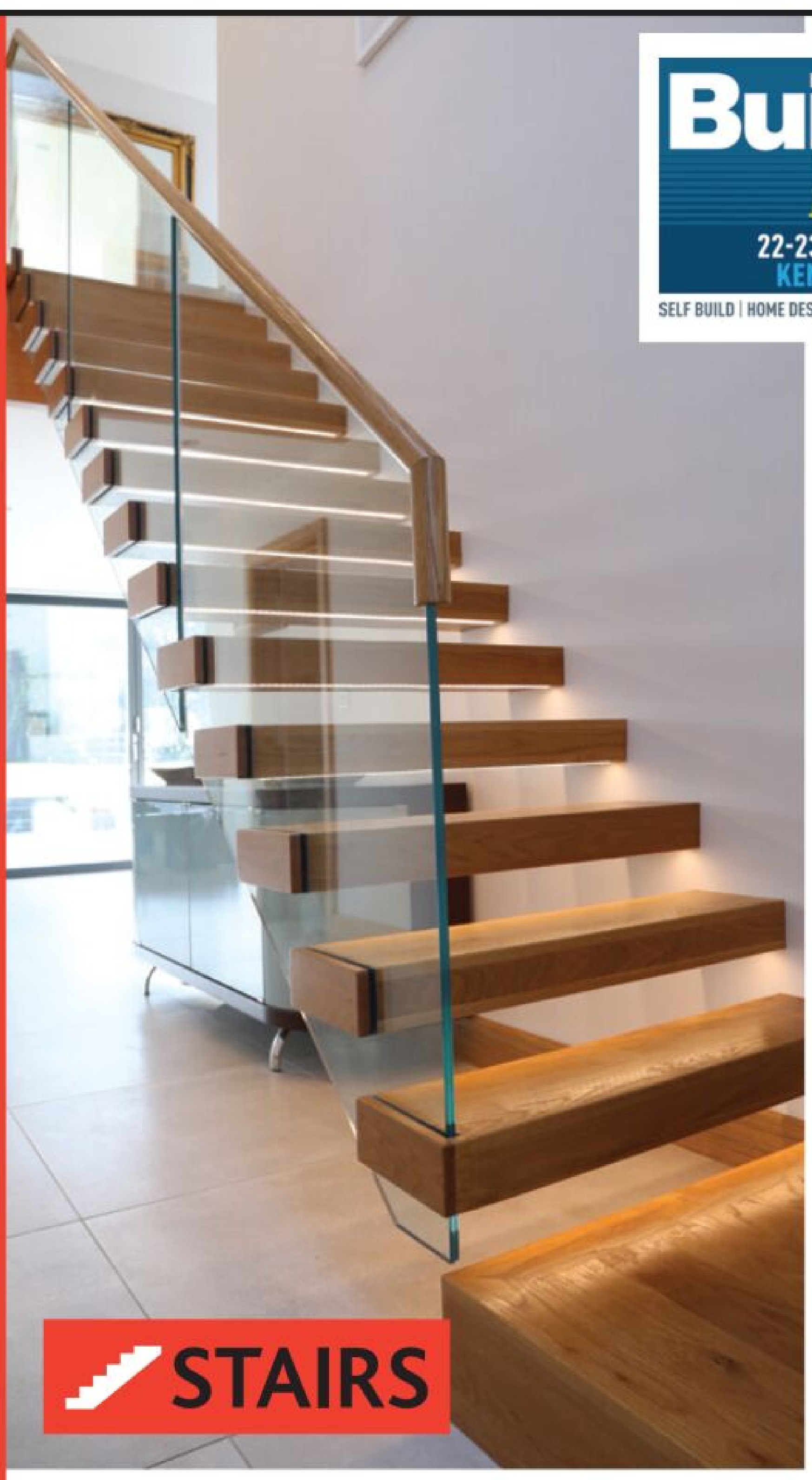

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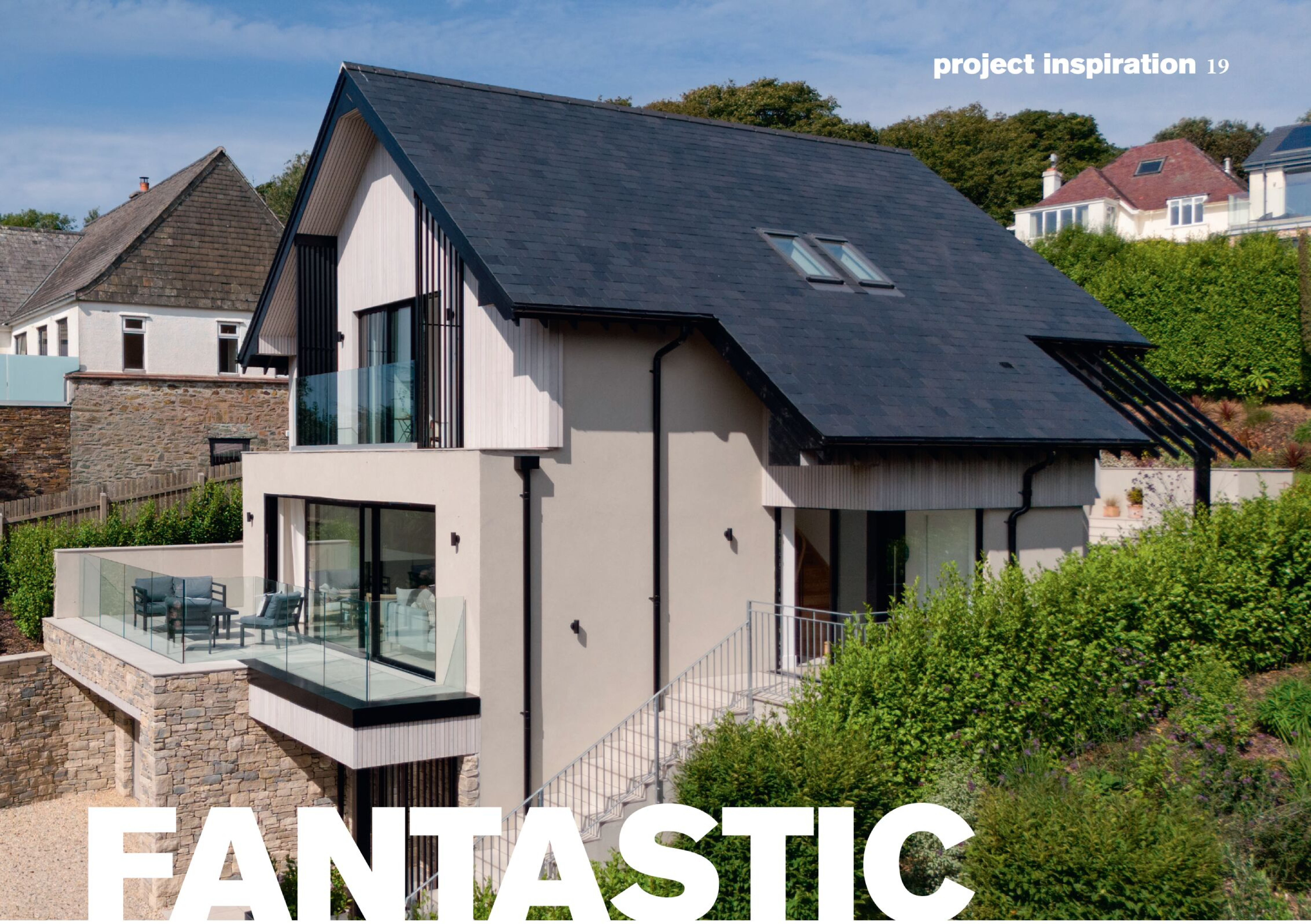
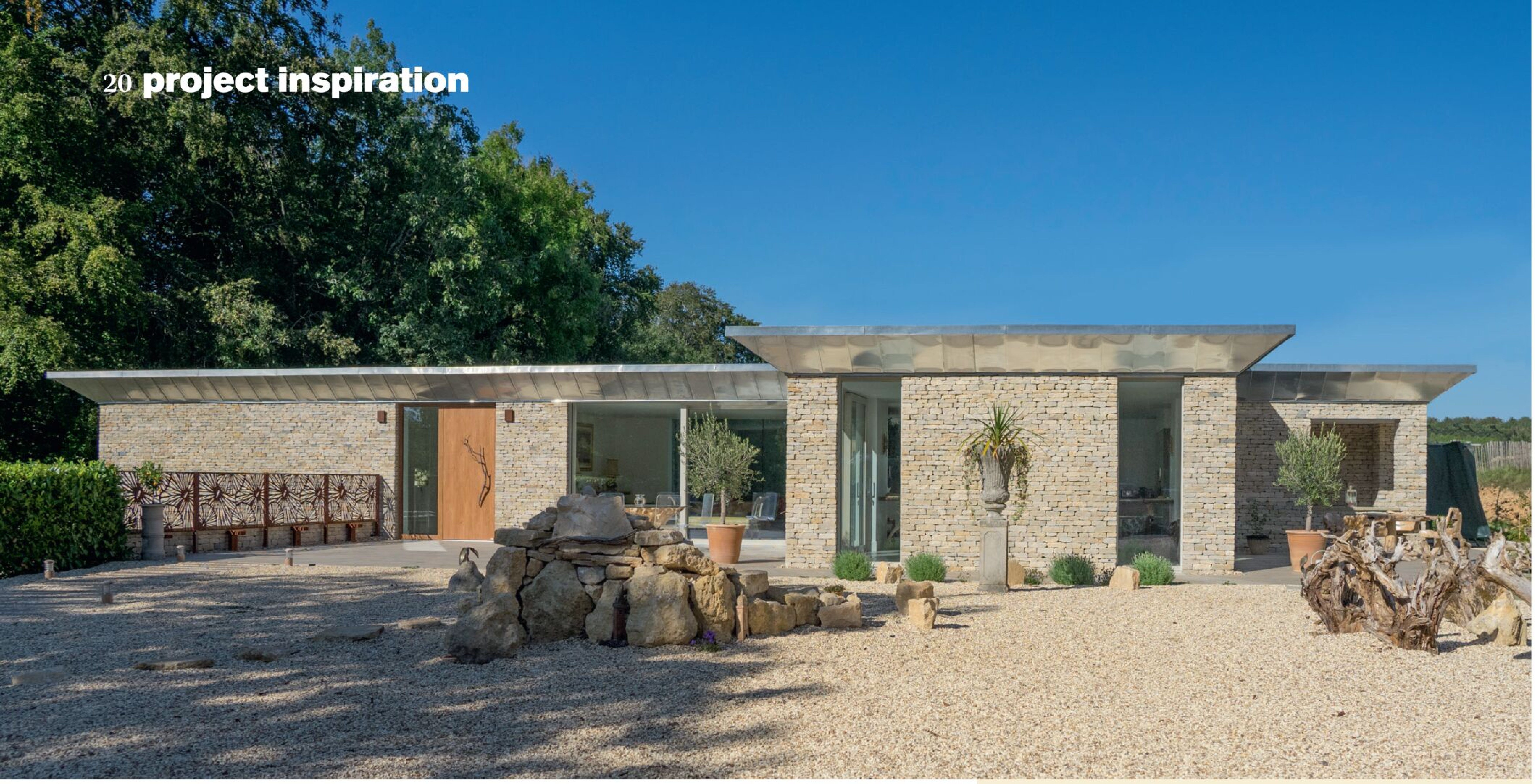


FANTASTIC ICF HOMES

Insulated concrete formwork is an innovative structural system that can be used to create impactful architectural features and ultra-efficient homes. See what's possible with Sander Tel's roundup of eye-catching examples

STRIKING SOLUTION

Built by Lilburn & Elliott construction and created using a Nudura ICF superstructure, this four-bedroom home is situated in the coastal town of Salcombe, Devon. The expansive openings were made possible with the use of a steel framed structure that was bolted to the ICF walls. The ground floor is made up of a solid concrete raft base, while the first and second floors are a block and beam construction. The shell of the building went up in just eight weeks. The house's exterior boasts a charming blend of stone and Siberian larch cladding, with wide spans of glazing from Origin, to capture the coastal views. **(www.lilburnelliott.co.uk, www.nudura.com, www.origin-global.com)**



EXPERT VIEW 5 BENEFITS OF ICF CONSTRUCTION

LISA TREWIN from R-Wall takes a look at the main advantages of building with ICF

THERMAL PERFORMANCE

One of the biggest advantages of building with ICF is its exceptional thermal performance, achieving U-Values as low as 0.09W/m^{2}K. The continuous insulation layers and integral thermal mass of the concrete helps to regulate internal temperatures, providing more comfortable living environments. The lack of cavity prevents the negative effects of thermal looping, too – this is a process that reduces the insulation's thermal performance. A recent study conducted by CLEB Laboratories has proven ICF can provide up to a 60% annual energy saving compared to a timber frame built to the same permitted code.

AIRTIGHTNESS The double, continuous layer of insulation and the monolithic concrete core creates naturally airtight structures, preventing cold air influx and internal heat loss, therefore maximising the building's thermal performance. This ensures the efficiency of heating, cooling and ventilation systems, helping to create healthier living environments for building occupants.

WEATHER RESISTANCE

One of the standout features of ICF buildings is their strength and ability to withstand extreme weather conditions, including winds of up to 250 mph. ICF's resistance to water means build programmes can continue into the winter months without delay, giving the ability to assemble and cast in almost any weather condition. Post construction issues, such as water ingress, pose no threat to the ICF superstructure, ensuring future longevity of the building.

SOUNDPROOFING Noise pollution is an issue that affects everyone and achieving good sound attenuation is essential to creating quieter living environments, improved privacy, and enhanced overall wellbeing. Noise is absorbed into the insulation and reflected by the concrete, resulting in outstanding sound attenuation levels often exceeding STC ratings of 50 + decibels. When compared to a standard timber frame, this equates to approximately a third less sound penetrating the walls.

SPEED OF CONSTRUCTION

It's an exceptionally quick build system, for example laying one set of ICF blocks can equate to laying 14 concrete blocks in a matter of minutes. Once the formwork is constructed and poured, this is the finished wall system, and the follow-on trades also continue at a faster rate. Due to ICF's flexible, lightweight nature, movement around site is quicker and easier and its water-resistant properties means trades can continue working on the build regardless of the weather, minimising construction delays and helping ensure project deadlines are met.

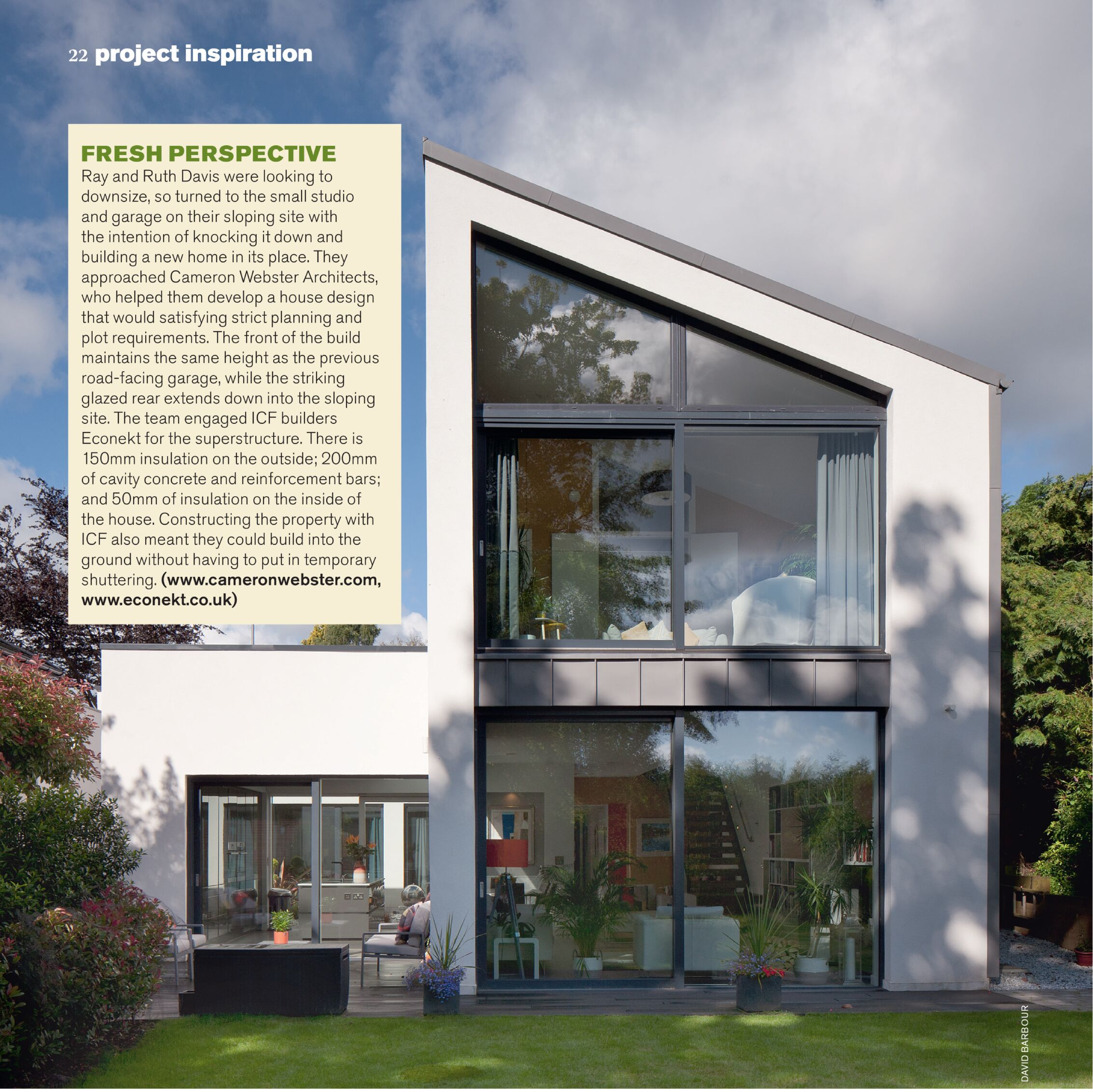
LAYING LOW

Homeowners Derrick and Gail found the perfect self build opportunity at the top of their garden – a sloping plot that offered spectacular views of the Cotswolds. The site leant itself well to ICF construction, as the sturdy combination of foam blocks and concrete embrace a wide range of excellent design possibilities. Supplied by Sandalcroft Construction and crowned Best ICF Home at the 2023 Build It Awards, this scheme embraces the site perfectly. The home features a sympathetic, low-profile stone-clad design to minimise its impact on the landscape, plus large picture windows to capture the vistas. **(www.sandalcroftconstruction.co.uk)**

SIMON MAXWELL

COASTAL REBUILD

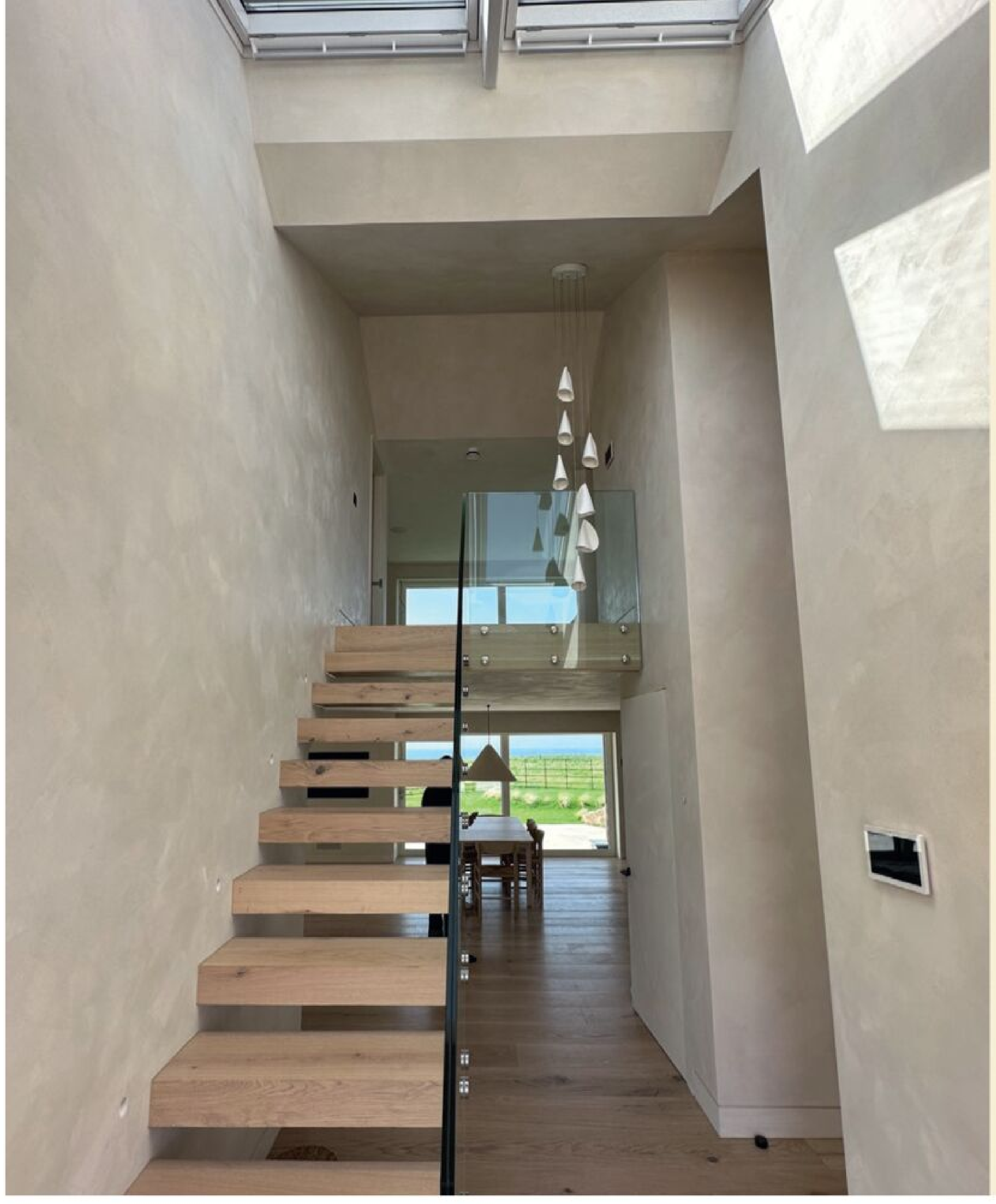
When Jim and Lesley Driver came across a 1930s bungalow in Hampshire, they were keen to renovate and extend, undertaking a deep energy retrofit to bring the home up to modern standards. However, upon closer inspection it became apparent that the house's structure was too weak to support this. Instead, the couple knocked the bungalow down and rebuilt a striking, Bauhaus-inspired home in its place. The pair worked with LA Hally Architect to create the scheme, which includes a garage, ensuite bedrooms, utility and drying room on the ground floor and an open-plan living area upstairs with access to a sea-facing balcony. After exploring several eco build systems, the Drivers opted for an insulated concrete formwork system from ICF Homes as it would ensure speedy construction on the restricted site. The result is a spectacular and energy-efficient family home with light-filled living areas. **(www.lahally.com, www.icfhomes.co.uk)**

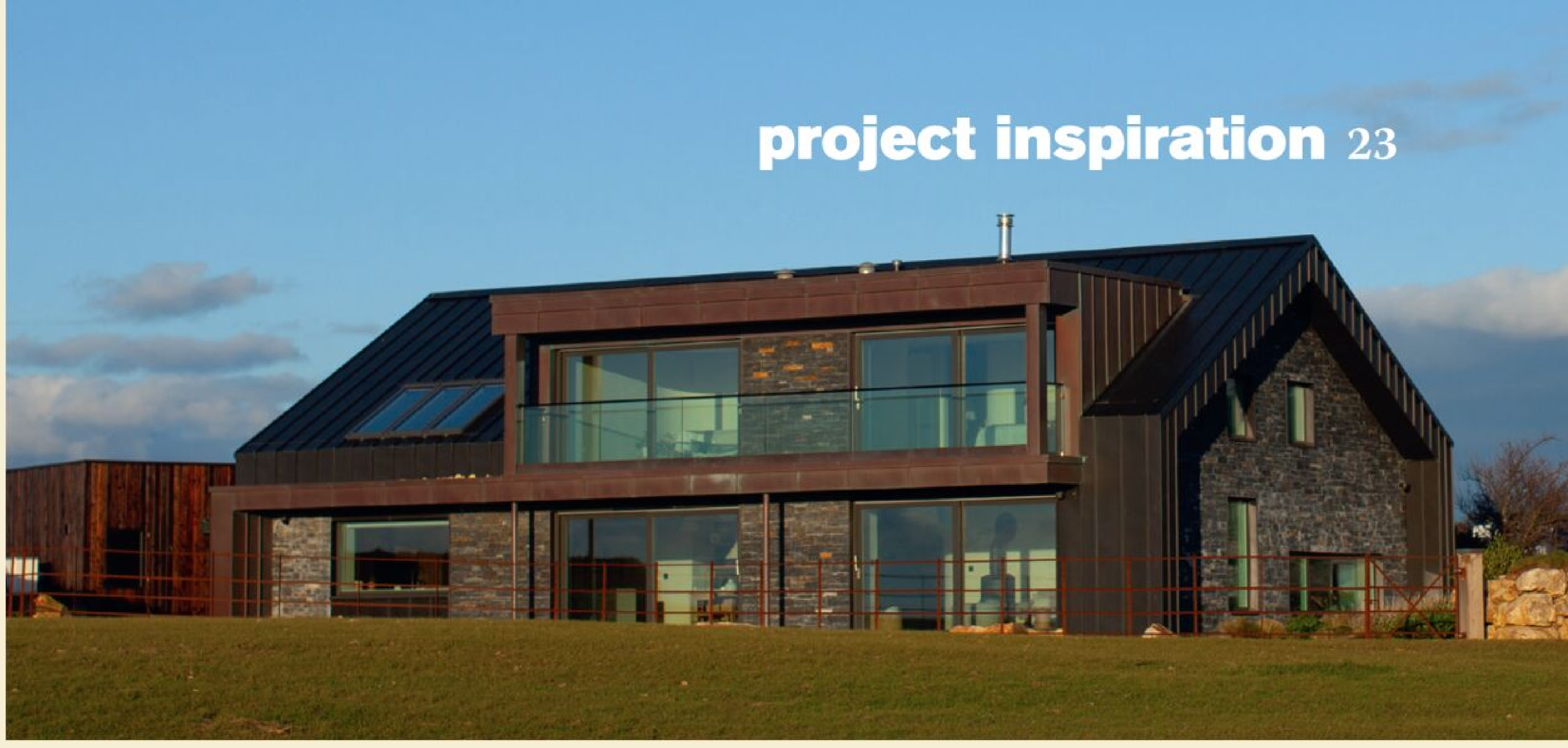


DAVID BARBOUR

FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Ray and Ruth Davis were looking to downsize, so turned to the small studio and garage on their sloping site with the intention of knocking it down and building a new home in its place. They approached Cameron Webster Architects, who helped them develop a house design that would satisfying strict planning and plot requirements. The front of the build maintains the same height as the previous road-facing garage, while the striking glazed rear extends down into the sloping site. The team engaged ICF builders Econekt for the superstructure. There is 150mm insulation on the outside; 200mm of cavity concrete and reinforcement bars; and 50mm of insulation on the inside of the house. Constructing the property with ICF also meant they could build into the ground without having to put in temporary shuttering. **(www.cameronwebster.com, www.econekt.co.uk)**





SEA VIEWS

Situated on a picturesque site overlooking the sea, this spectacular home, designed by ARCO2 Architecture, fits seamlessly into its surroundings. Constructed using an ICF superstructure from R-Wall, the dwelling offers panoramic sea views, stretching from Newquay to Cape Cornwall's western tip. The high-performance home features triple glazing and an MVHR system. An expansive first-floor balcony provides solar shading for the glazed living area below. **(www.arco2.co.uk, www.r-wall.co.uk)**

CLOSER LOOK DESIGN FEATURES & KEY CONSIDERATIONS

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Curved walls ICF can be used to build unique and showstopping design details such as curved walls. The foam blocks can be easily cut and shaped to create rounded walls before the concrete is poured.

Large expanses of glazing such as big picture windows and sets of glass doors are no problem in an ICF home. The system can support openings of up to around 6.3m as standard. The more steel and concrete used, the larger the apertures can be. Corner windows and cantilevered openings for bifold doors or sliding doors are also possible.

Vaulted ceilings Non-standard roof structures are a popular design feature for contemporary homes, and ICF lends itself very well to this.

Cantilevers This clever design feature, which consists of a structural element that extends out beyond the floor below, can be more straightforward to realise with insulated concrete formwork thanks to its inherent strength.

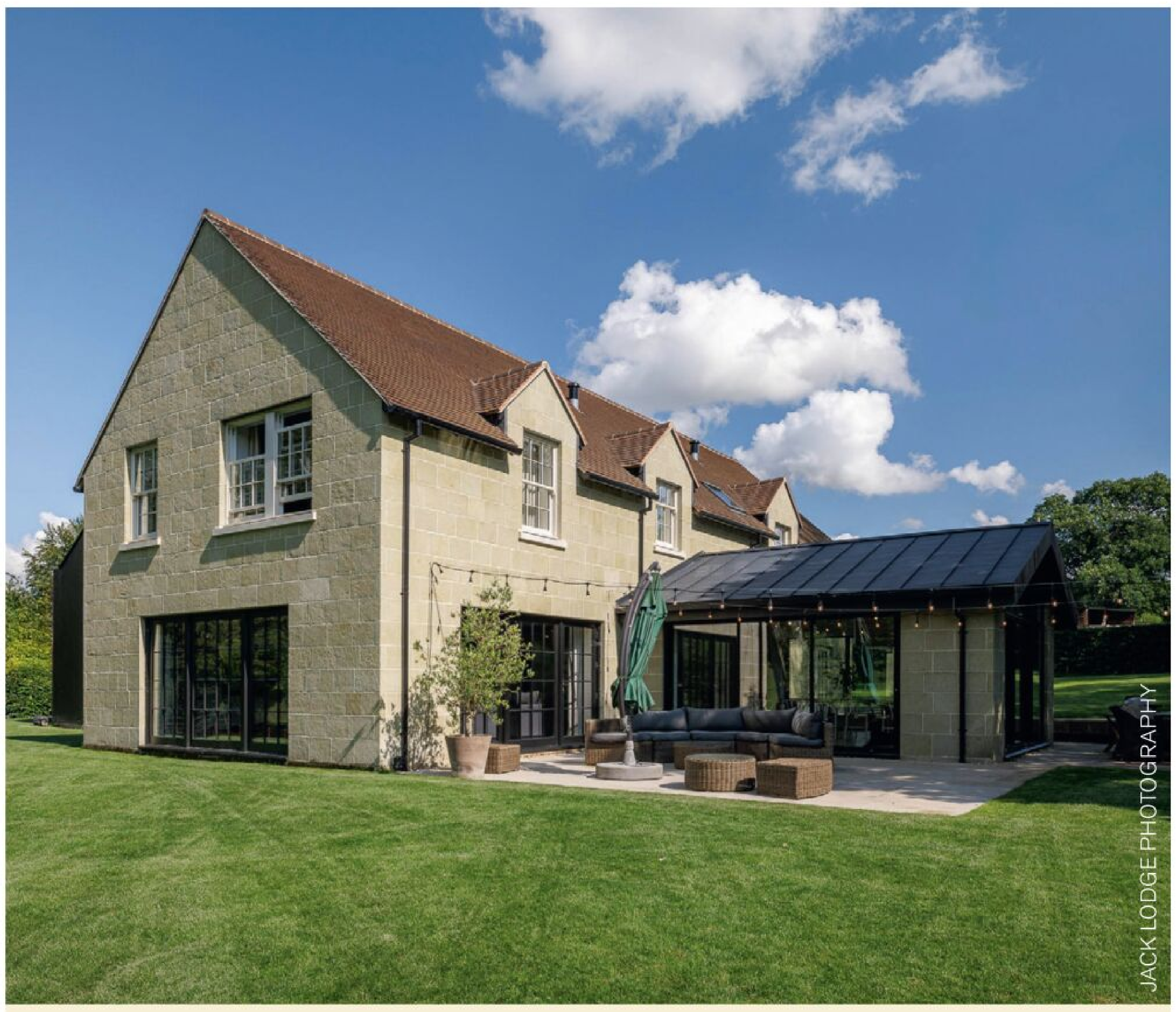
Subterranean structures ICF is a great option when it comes to constructing basements and retaining walls, where the structure needs to be highly watertight to prevent damp and water ingress. It's straightforward to waterproof, and you can continue above-ground in ICF or another build system.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Making alterations This can be fairly complicated once the concrete core has been poured. Most people building their house's superstructure with ICF opt for stud walls internally, giving them more scope to change their layout later on. You can futureproof the ICF structure by having lintels cast in for any potential windows and doors, so that if you do ever extend, you won't lose any structural integrity.

Drilling into concrete is tricky Instead of this, fixing strips are provided within the blocks. These are generally placed at 200mm spacings so you can hang heavy fixtures such as kitchen cupboards, towel rails or radiators directly on the strips and securely fasten them into place.

ICF is extremely strong However, that doesn't mean it can deliver those striking, standout architectural features on its own. Designs such as cantilevers and fully-glazed corners may well still need some extra support in the form of RSJs, glulam beams, steel posts etc.



JACK LODGE PHOTOGRAPHY

INSTANT CLASSIC

This charming family home, nestled into the Wiltshire countryside, has been constructed using BecoWallform's 375 ICF system, which provides a wall U-value of 0.14 W/m²K. The sympathetic design remains in keeping with the local architecture – featuring a stone-clad exterior with traditional sash windows. The highly-efficient structure ensures a high-performance home throughout all seasons, with little additional input required from the air source heat pump. **(www.becowallform.co.uk)**

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Readers' homes

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26 **HOME TO ROOST**

Originally planning to buy a humble seaside bungalow, Rick and Julie Anderson couldn't resist the beauty of the Kent countryside to be the backdrop for their self build home

36 **MODERN INTERVENTION**

Nestled among traditional bungalows, Darren Young's contemporary renovation showcases sympathetic materials in a modern context

46 **DESIGNED FOR LIVING**

Rhodri Jones utilised his experience as an architectural designer when creating his family home with partner Meinir. The result is an impressive cedar-clad haven

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Home to roost

Self builders **Rick and Julie Anderson** replaced a former chicken shed in the Kent countryside with a beautiful, contextual two-storey home

WORDS **CAROLINE EDNIE** PHOTOS **KATHERINE MALONDA**

The composite cladding and concrete roof tiles were chosen for their colour contrast, charming look and low maintenance requirements

It's quite a leap to imagine that Malt House was, until relatively recently, a large chicken shed. The transformation from coop to contemporary bespoke home by Julie and Rick Anderson is all the more impressive when you account for the fact they'd originally planned to simply buy a bungalow by the sea. "We were living in a traditional house in nearby Lewes Valley and decided to put it on the market and buy a coastal property in Brighton," says Julie, who along with Rick ran a building company in the area for many years, which they sold last year. "At the same time, my sister and brother-in-law had just built a new house on a former local farm site. They invited us to a Christmas drinks party, where we met the farmer who had sold them the plot."

It turned out the landowner had more opportunities on his site. "He asked if we'd be interested in the chicken shed next door, as he was selling it," says Julie. "We hadn't been thinking about self building at all at this point, but it was a great site. Roughly three gin and tonics later, our curiosity was piqued. We ended up going back to visit the farmer the next morning, on Boxing Day, and negotiating the plot size and price." The land had outline planning permission for a bungalow barn, but the couple wanted to create a two-storey building. "We spoke to the local council, who said that they were happy with our initial plans," says Julie.

Design for living

From a planning perspective, a key advantage of the site is that it's located just outside of the local conservation area and the green belt. Confident that they could get permission to create the long-term home they had in mind, the couple sought out a design professional to bring their drawings and ideas to life. "We knew lots of architects as we worked in construction, but we were keen to appoint someone who could partner closely with us, rather than go away and do their own thing. James Rich of local firm JRD Architects was the perfect choice," says Julie.

The Andersons had a clear idea about how they wanted the house to look and perform. "We discussed with James that we wanted a home as close to Passivhaus standards as possible," says Julie. However, they were keen to be practical about where they

FACT FILE

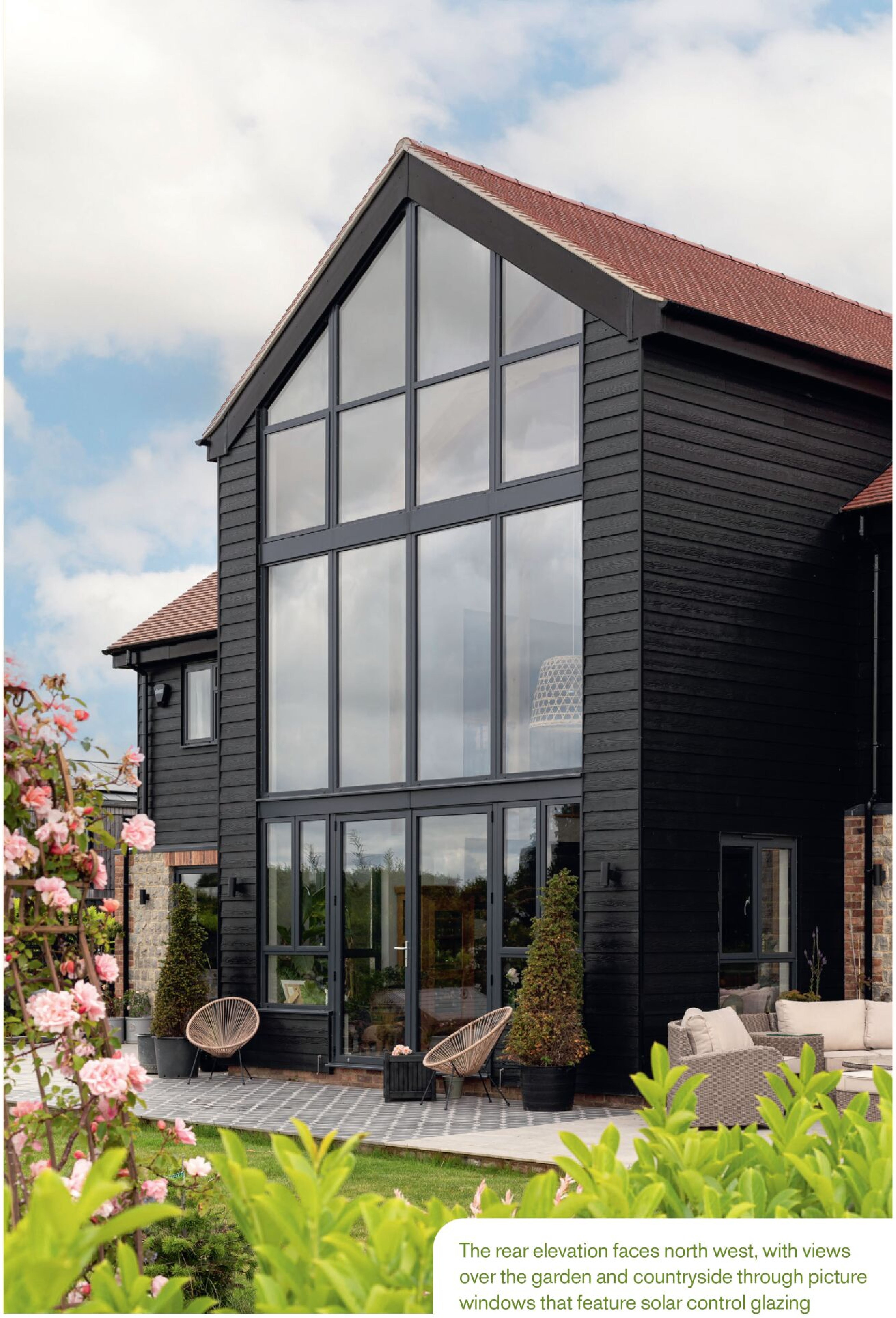
NAMES Julie & Rick Anderson
OCCUPATIONS Semi-retired
LOCATION Kent
TYPE OF PROJECT Self build
STYLE Contemporary barn
CONSTRUCTION METHOD Timber frame
PROJECT ROUTE Architect-designed & main contractor built, with homeowners heavily involved throughout
PLOT SIZE 0.25 acres
LAND COST £450,000
BOUGHT 2020
HOUSE SIZE 273m²
PROJECT COST £550,000
PROJECT COST PER M² £2,015
TOTAL COST £1,000,000
BUILDING WORK COMMENCED March 2021
BUILDING WORK TOOK 13 months
CURRENT VALUE £1,500,000

spent their money. "We were willing to make compromises with items such as an air source heat pump," says Julie. "We eventually went with a gas boiler." Aesthetically, low-maintenance solutions were the order of the day. "We wanted lots of glass, local Kentish ragstone at the bottom level of the building, plus cladding that we could hose down and not have to paint every year," says Julie. "Internally, we were keen on oak accents in the main areas, such as the roof trusses and staircase."

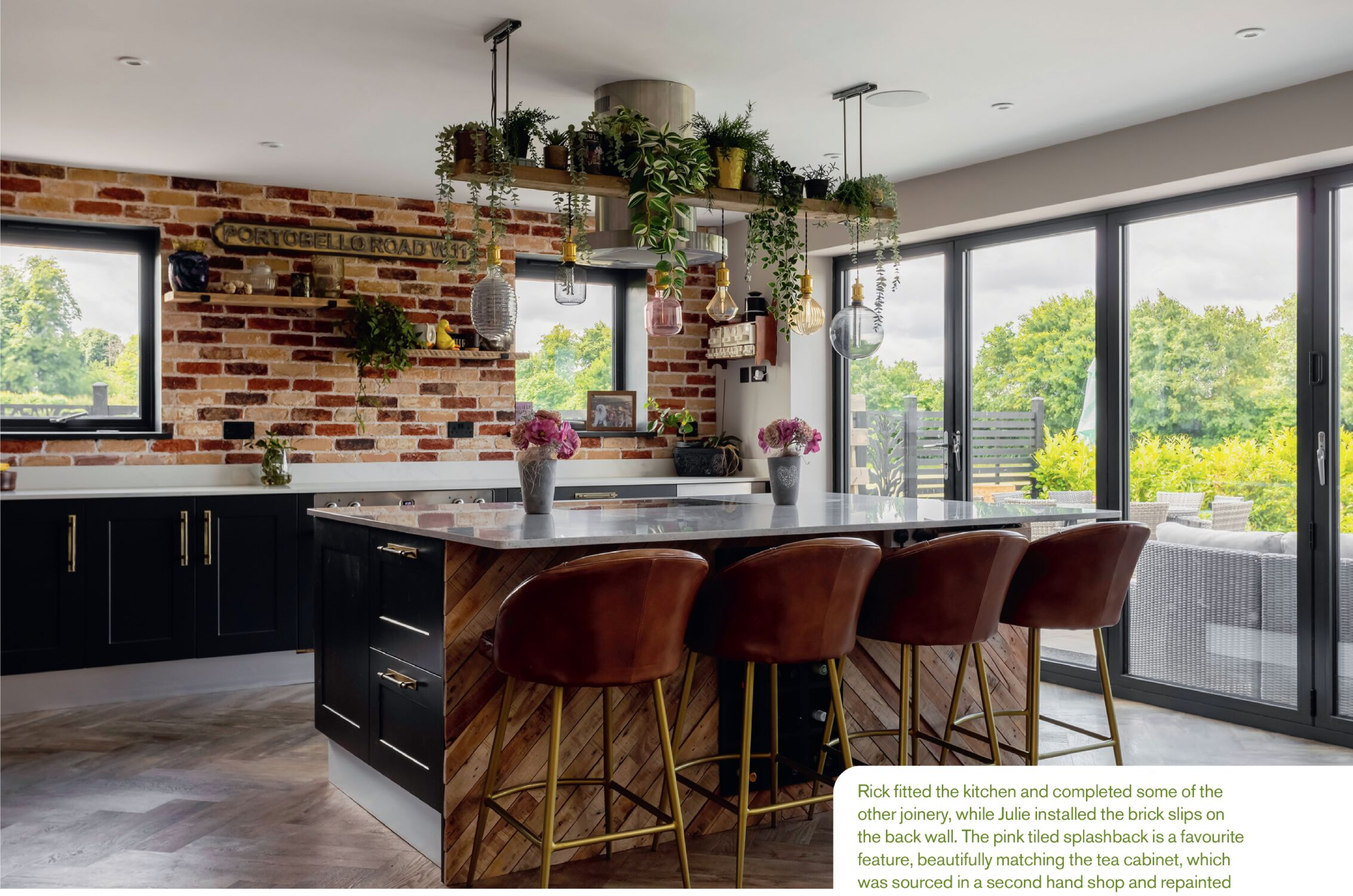
James's final plan took inspiration from local rural architecture mixed with some contemporary details. "This involved combining bold forms with traditional materials in order to deliver the clients' vision," he explains. The main front and rear elevations showcase extensive triple glazing, complemented by durable composite Hardieboard cladding and low-maintenance concrete roof tiles. These were specifically selected for their longevity, affordability and minimal future upkeep requirements.

"The ragstone was sourced from a local quarry, just two miles away," says James. "This was used to form the base of the building, along with blockwork, which creates a real feeling of stability, as the walling is almost double the depth of the timber frame above. Ragstone was also used in the window cills and fireplace, adding a sense of locality and sustainability to the design."

Sustainability was a watchword for the project, which comprises a highly-insulated, prefabricated timber frame. This partners with ultra-efficient triple glazed windows, featuring a blue-tinted solar control coating to avoid overheating in summer, and an insulated concrete ground floor slab. The resulting thermal performance ensures the gas-powered underfloor heating (UFH) operates very efficiently, with the floor slab soaking up heat in the day and releasing it again at night to help deliver a consistent temperature.



The rear elevation faces north west, with views over the garden and countryside through picture windows that feature solar control glazing



Rick fitted the kitchen and completed some of the other joinery, while Julie installed the brick slips on the back wall. The pink tiled splashback is a favourite feature, beautifully matching the tea cabinet, which was sourced in a second hand shop and repainted

Julie designed and sourced every element of the interiors, including low-maintenance materials, such as Moduleo luxury vinyl flooring, which sits atop the underfloor heating. Pocket doors save on the clutter of traditional hinged units, while allowing the couple to open up or enclose spaces as desired

"Everyone who comes into the house comments on how cosy it is," says Julie. "I was slightly obsessed that the UFH wouldn't keep the whole house warm, so we installed vintage-style radiators upstairs – but we don't need them; they're just ornaments!" Heating wasn't the only factor the couple considered when planning for a more sustainable home. "There's also rainwater harvesting and a wastewater recycling unit, which are particularly important given the home's remote location," says James.

All in the detail

Planning permission was granted with no issues, but unfortunately the timing coincided with the Covid pandemic, bringing materials shortages and price fluctuations. The Andersons felt this most when trying to procure the large oak elements, such as the porch, roof trusses and staircase, which were constructed by a separate contractor. The oak had to be sourced in France, which added an extra cost, and also caused a delay of almost six weeks. Of course, this change of schedule impacted other parts of this phase.

"This wasn't a particularly complicated build, although the transition between the ragstone, cavity and blockwork elements and the timber frame was one aspect that required more thought," says James. "It was a challenging junction in terms of thermal bridging and how easy it would be to build on site. Fortunately, we were able to consider it at an early stage in the design process – if we hadn't done this, it could have impacted the project to such a

WE LEARNED...

USING A TIMBER FRAME COMPANY helped to accelerate the design and the build process. It was especially helpful that they had their own in-house structural engineers who could calculate the steel elements.

TIME SPENT PLANNING is invaluable. We were eager to recover some of the time we lost at the tender stage, so the project probably started on site sooner than it should have done. If we had spent longer preparing after choosing the builder, we could have potentially avoided delays later on in the development.

YOU HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS on your build. When doing so, consider the value of what you're comparing. Some things may offer a personal value that outweighs the financial outlay. For instance, we were set on using ragstone and oak trusses from day one; no compromises were made here. Instead, we looked to save costs elsewhere on things that were not as important to us.

CHANGES ON SITE are a common theme on a self build, but the variations this causes often affect other aspects of the project. So, stop and consider the wider impact before making changes. We made some tweaks to the prefabricated timber frame once on site – but the consequence was that the finishes and workmanship were not to the same standard as elsewhere, meaning we had to go back and amend them – costing us time and money.

degree that planning amendments may have been required, causing us some lengthy delays." Once this detail was resolved, however, everything proceeded in a straightforward fashion. The ground floor is essentially one large area, with a four-bedroom upper storey, accessed by the central staircase. "This is a house that was designed to be lived in, with bags of character and which the couple were able to put their own mark on," says James.

Running the project

The Andersons' experience in the building trade proved to be invaluable in terms of managing the schedule and budget. Once the plasterboard walls were in place, they effectively took over the completed shell – sourcing the materials and appointing subcontractors to finish off the work. "We did a lot of managing trades and finding suppliers," says Julie.

"When the shell was up, we procured our own window contractor and all the internal works, which meant we could stay within our £500,000 budget allocation, plus fees," continues Julie, who was an interior designer for the couple's former business. "Any overspend was down to me wanting a higher spec."

The glazing is an expansive and bold feature, establishing views across gardens and fields, deep into the Kent countryside. It also floods the living spaces with natural light. But this wasn't only

Above, below & bottom right: A passionate gardener, Julie worked with a landscape designer to create the planting scheme, greenhouse and patio area – transforming a farmer's field full of mud and weeds into an enjoyable outdoor space. The couple planted 250 privet hedges, which didn't seem to be growing, so later took them out and replaced them with 250 laurels. "I wish they'd grow quicker; 10 feet in a day to create our boundary!" says Julie.

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The four bedrooms are modest in size, but the trusses create a real feeling of height. The principal bedrooms face the garden and landscape views

achieved with the swathes of glass used: smaller windows played their part, too, particularly in the kitchen, where they frame views of the landscape, creating a more intimate feel. The bespoke oak staircase was another key interior feature, with the couple keen to ensure the structure was something really special. Multiple options were considered before hitting on the final galleried design (see Closer Look on page 34 for more).

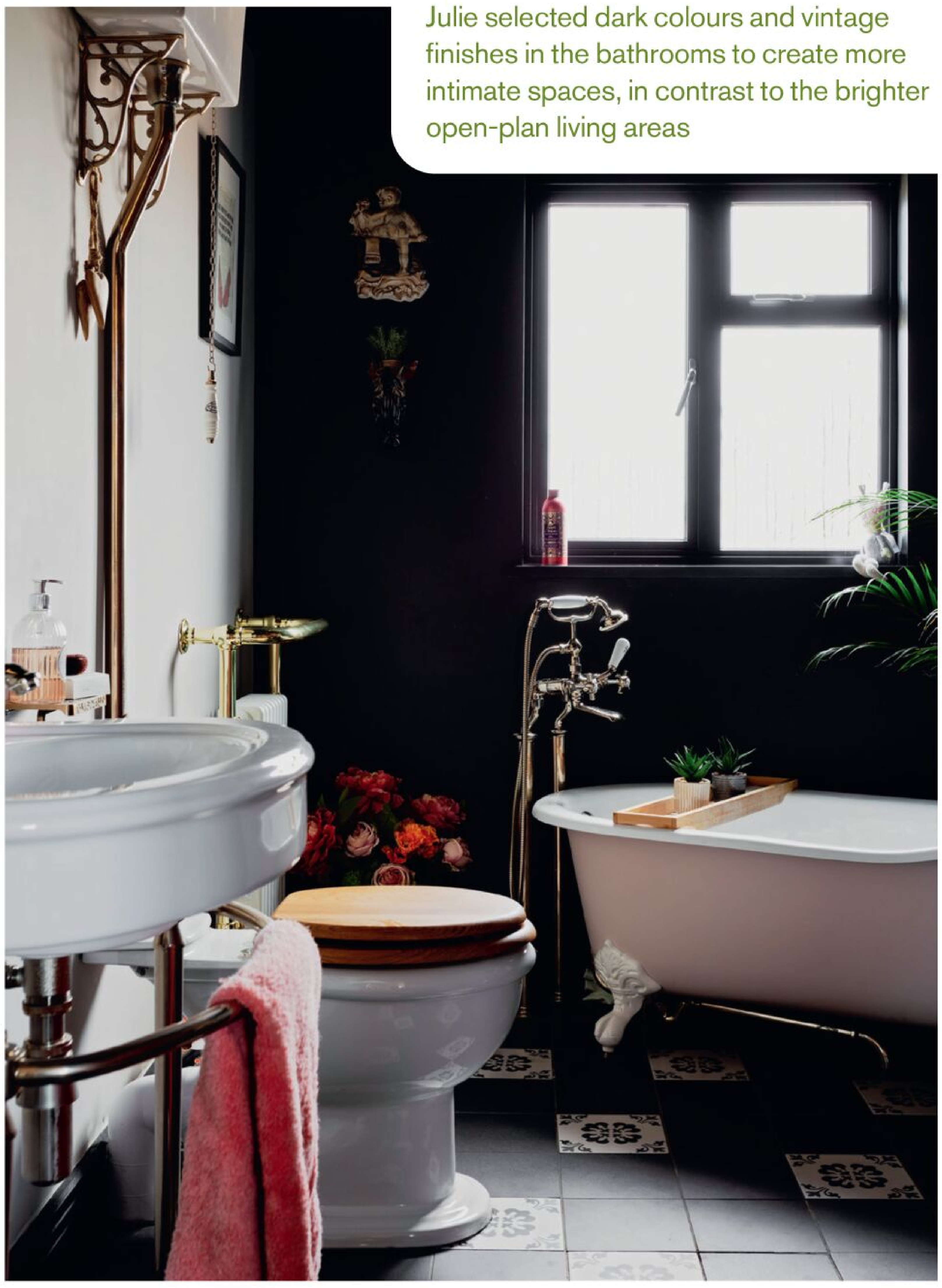
The house also works well on a practical level, with plenty of storage and utilities. "We have an Old English sheepdog, and he only has to look at mud and he's covered in it," says Julie. "So, he has his own bathroom with a waist-height shower on the ground floor. And there is a utility room, too: I like the fact these areas are round the corner from the living-kitchen-diner, so we can keep the living space open and uncluttered."

Everything in its right place

The couple wouldn't change anything about their brand new home, although Julie admits that the build process had its challenges. "We had a JCT small works design and build contract, and we thought that would be sufficient. My life ran to construction schedules, but the workmen didn't seem to follow this in the same way," says Julie. "My advice would be to choose a builder who is as deadline oriented as you are. Project programmes can slip, and if it's you who's assuming all the responsibility of getting everything back on track, it can be stressful – even with the benefit of a contract."

If they ever build a house again, the pair feel they would want to procure and manage everything themselves, "then we can work to our own deadlines," says Julie. "But if you're working or running a business like we were, it's difficult to find the time." And what's it like to live in their self built house? "We love it," says Julie. "I never thought I'd have a bespoke home. I feel so lucky; and it all came about by chance!"

Julie selected dark colours and vintage finishes in the bathrooms to create more intimate spaces, in contrast to the brighter open-plan living areas



closer look

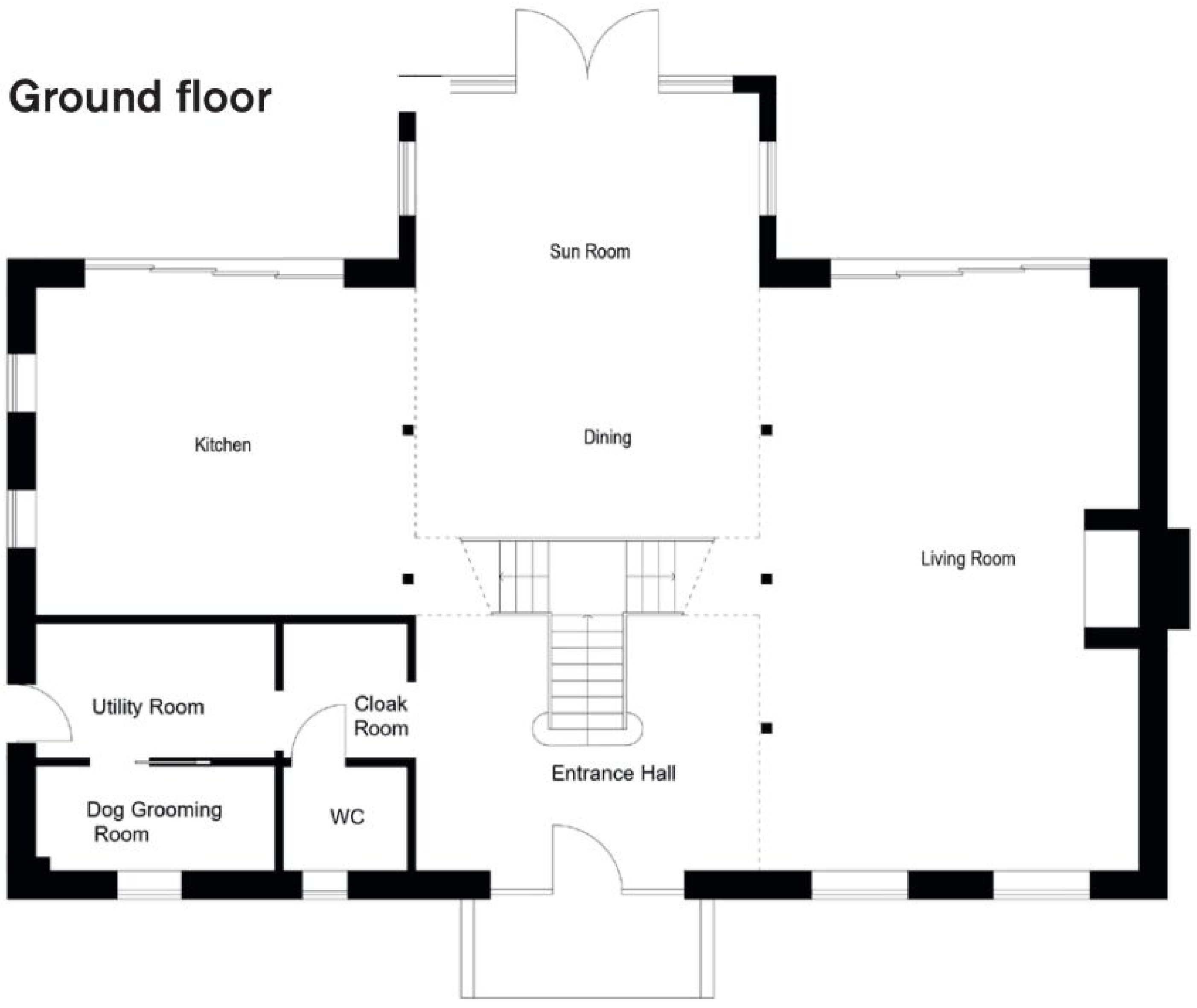
Creative connection

The gallerised staircase

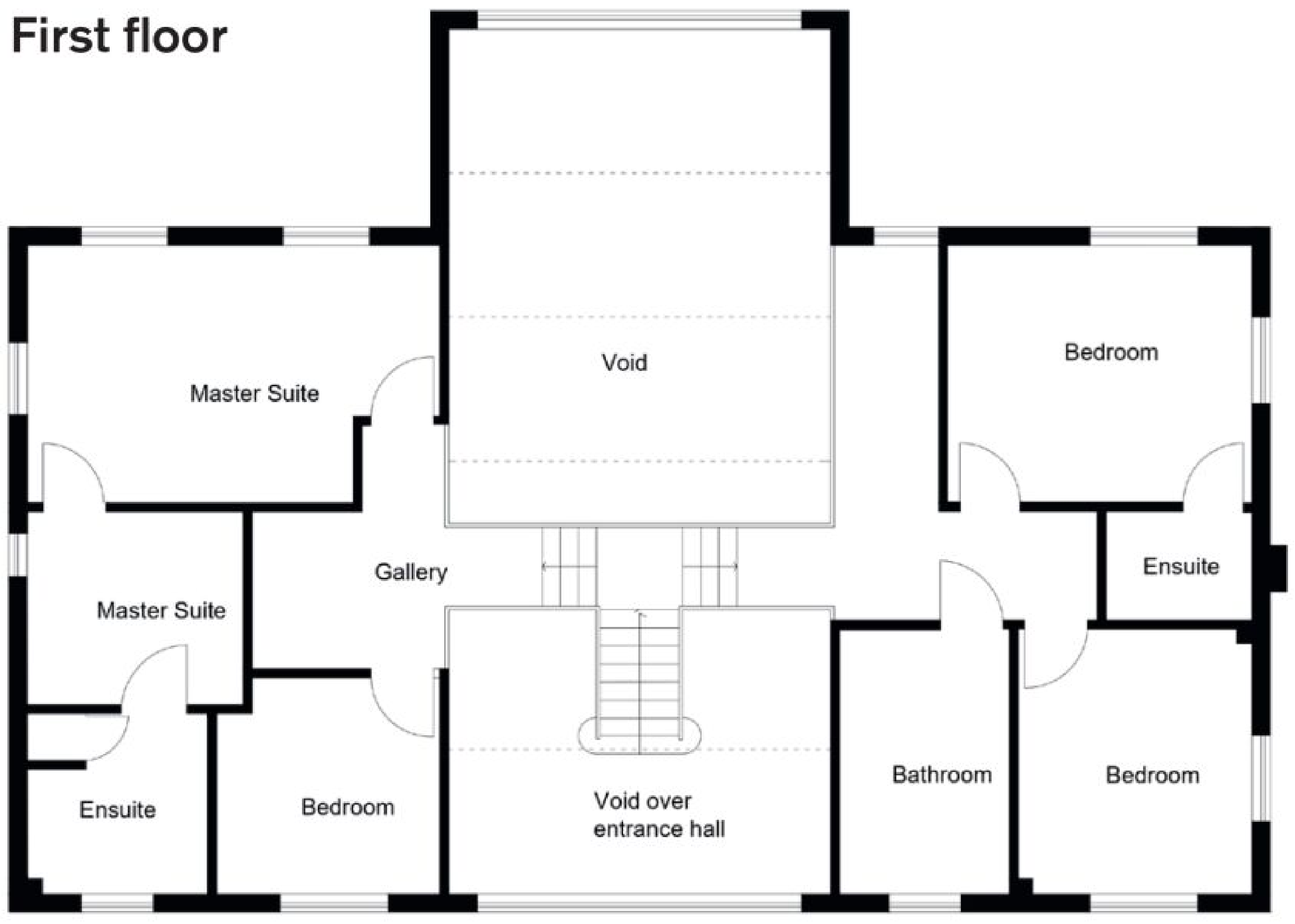
Julie, Rick, and architect James aimed to create meaningful moments in the design. "Going up and down stairs is something we do multiple times a day with little thought," says James. "Turning that everyday task into an experience, an opportunity to pause and see something differently, can make the familiar feel special." Julie and Rick wanted the downstairs to be open, and were keen on the idea of a gallery and seating area upstairs. At one point, a cantilevered structure was discussed – projecting out over the main living space as a mezzanine. "I convinced them to keep the area open, and they've since said it's one of the best decisions they made on the house, as it's a space that's used infrequently and would have detracted from the views," says James.

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Fees	£168	8%	£46,000
Preliminaries	£128	6%	£35,000
Foundations	£227	11%	£62,000
External walls & windows	£476	24%	£130,000
Roof structure & covering	£234	12%	£64,000
Internal walls	£37	2%	£10,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£73	4%	£20,000
Joinery & fittings	£73	4%	£20,000
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£106	5%	£29,000
Electrics	£99	5%	£27,000
Decorating	£4	<1%	£1,000
Interior fixtures & finishes	£183	9%	£50,000
External works (incl greenhouse, pond, patio & planting	£205	10%	£56,000
Grand total			**£550,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **JRD Architects** www.jrdkent.com STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **ARA Structural Designs** 01622 212012 www.arasd.co.uk TIMBER FRAME **Paramount Structures** 01386 258888 www.paramountse.co.uk INSULATION **EcoTherm** www.ecothermalinsulations.com FIBRE CEMENT CLADDING **James Hardie** www.jameshardie.co.uk RAGSTONE CLADDING **Gallagher Group** www.gallagher-group.co.uk WINDOWS **CRS Windows** www.crstradewindows.com WASTEWATER TREATMENT **Graf** www.grafuk.co.uk STAIRCASE INSTALLATION **Duncan's Carpentry** 07478 935047 www.duncanscarpentry.com UNDERFLOOR HEATING **Irwin Smith** 01622 746693 www.irwinsmith.co.uk LANDSCAPING **Gareden Design & Landscaping** 07714 790498 www.gareden.co.uk FLOORING **Moduleo** www.moduleo.com KITCHEN **Howdens** www.howdens.com TILES **Topps Tiles** www.toppstiles.co.uk BATHROOMS **Sanctuary Bathrooms** www.sanctuary-bathrooms.co.uk

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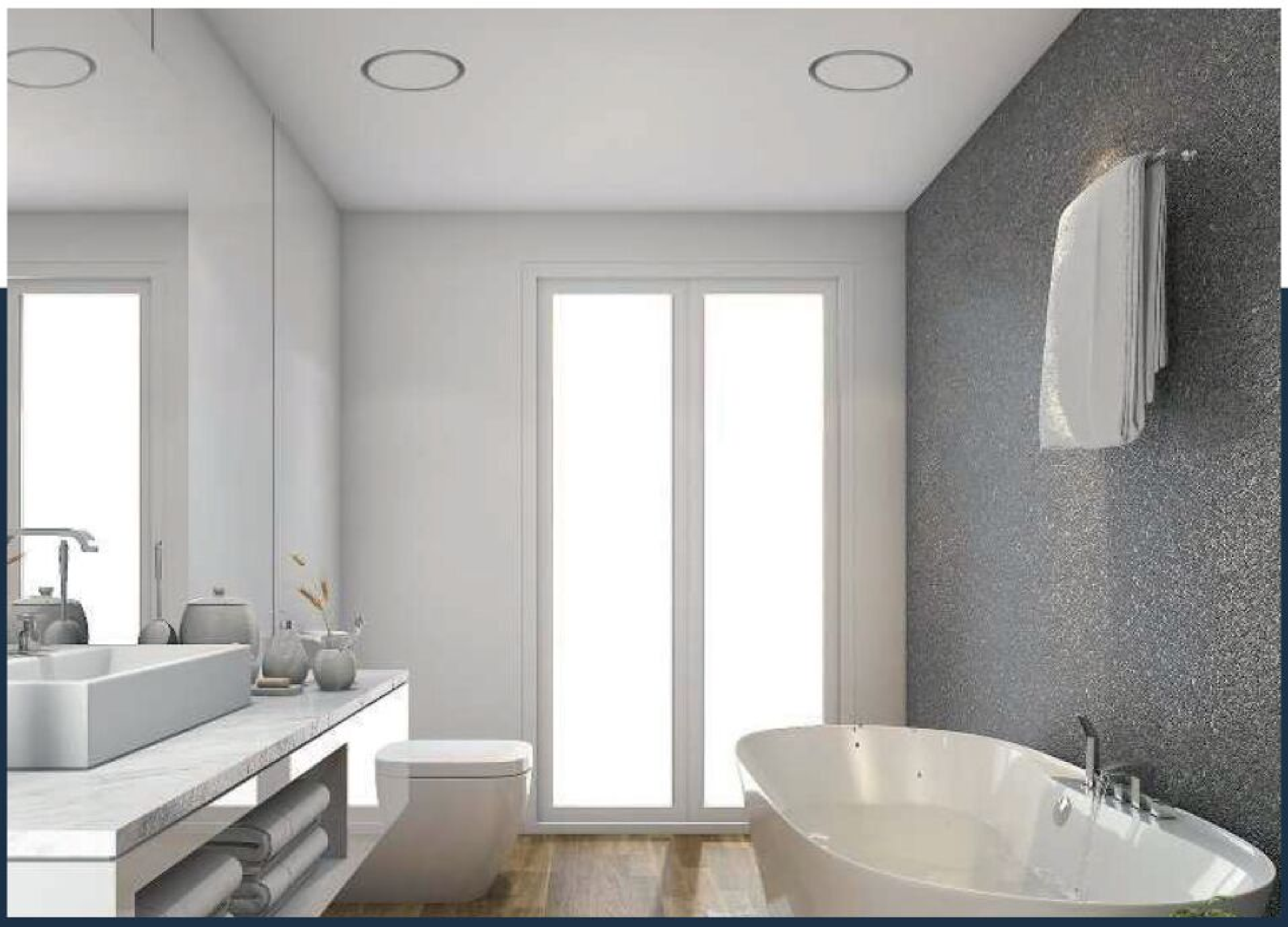

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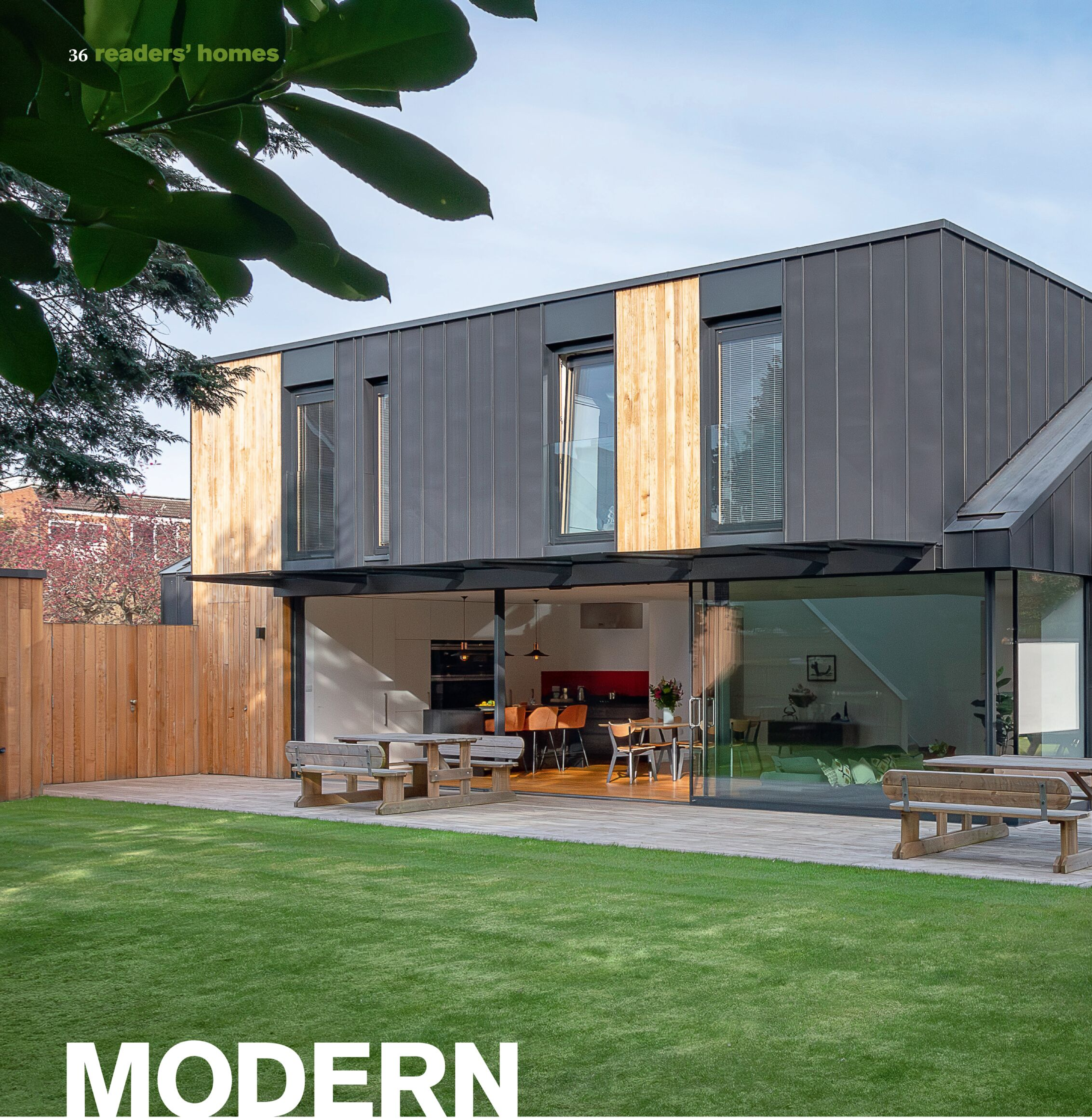
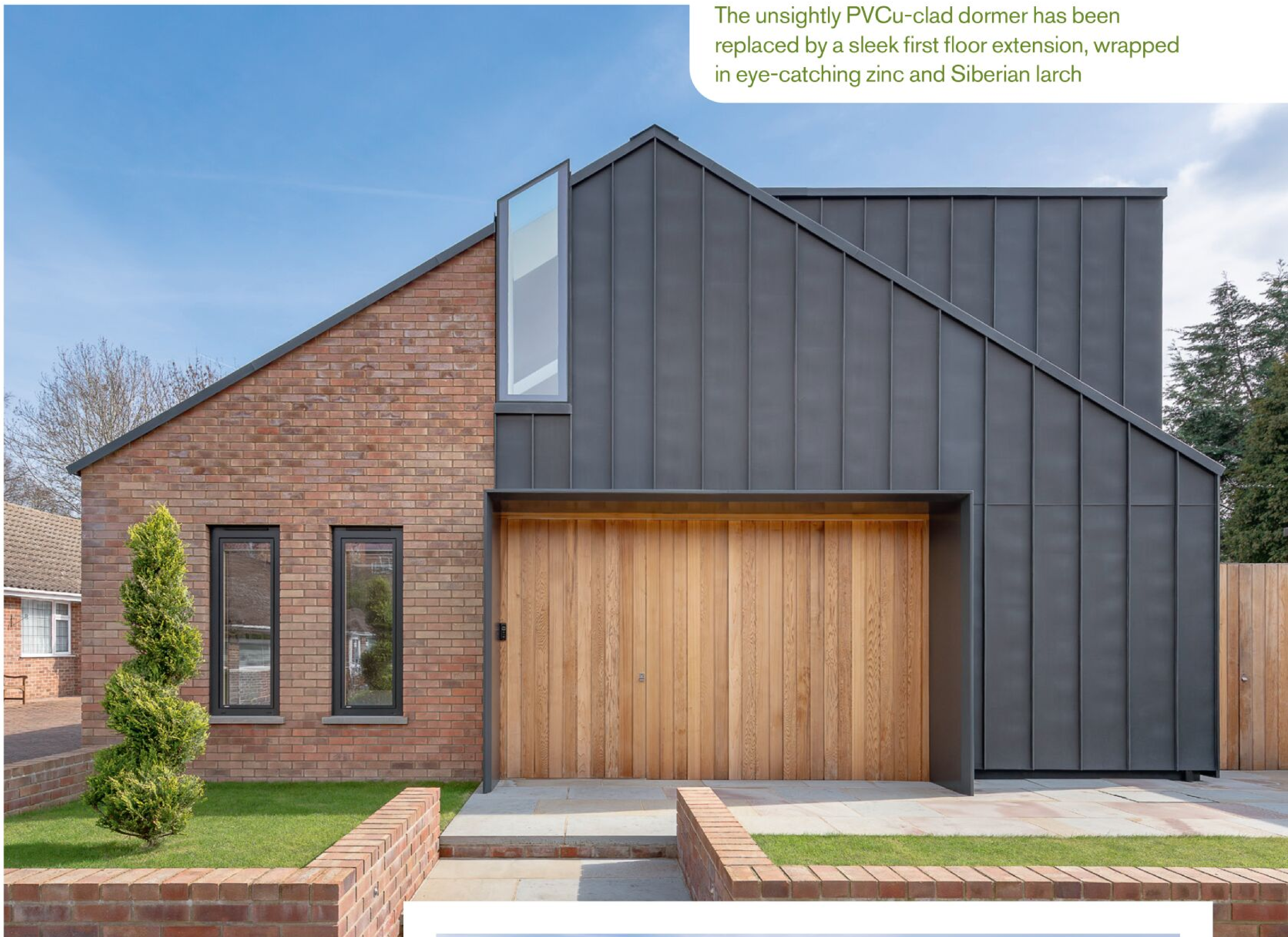


MODERN INTERVENTION

WORDS **JENNIFER GRIMBLE** PHOTOS **IMMER ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY**

After buying a modest bungalow, **Darren Young** undertook a dramatic and lengthy renovation project to transform it into a contemporary family home

In the past, Darren Young had renovated numerous homes to rent out, but by mid-2016, he was craving a project of his own. He began looking for properties in the Beckenham area of South London and soon found a post-war bungalow from the 1960s. Located on a quiet street away from a main road – something that was a priority for the security specialist – it had real promise. "There are three other bungalows on the street, all of the same style," says Darren. "It was dated and had a small, dormer loft conversion, but I could see its potential to be turned into a modern home."



The unsightly PVCu-clad dormer has been replaced by a sleek first floor extension, wrapped in eye-catching zinc and Siberian larch

From the side, the house appears to be a grand, two-storey home. The newly extended dormer loft is finished with tilt-and-turn windows that open inwards, specified with Juliet balconies for safety purposes

After having his offer accepted, Darren enlisted the help of his brother Craig, a structural engineer, and together they began building a workforce. "Craig recommended Chris Axon of Craft Architects to me," he says. "We met and got on really well, so I was keen to work with him on the project." Darren gave Chris a simple brief; he wanted to add a second storey and create a spacious and open internal layout, with ample natural light and sliding doors that would bring the outside in. "My primary aim was to make better use of the space I already had," he says.

Ridge restrictions

The existing property featured a poor quality, PVCu-clad dormer that was enclosed within a concrete pantile roof. Architect Chris knew this meant the council wouldn't oppose a redesign, as long as it was sympathetic to the neighbouring buildings. Upon approaching the London Borough of Bromley's planning team, Chris was told the existing ridge height and pitch must be retained, so he proposed increasing the scale of the dormer lengthways and wrapping it in modern zinc. The ground floor would also be opened up, to create generous, free-flowing living areas.

Working with the original footprint of the bungalow meant Chris had to find creative solutions to make the internal spaces look and feel spacious and inviting. "We did this by introducing a central, double-height atrium space into the ground floor plan, creating long visual vistas into the garden. We also formed a sunken living room within the open layout," he explains. "Despite the fact that the redesign created some fairly dramatic changes, the planning process was pretty smooth and we achieved consent within the standard eight-week time period."

Building up

As they had worked on projects previously, Darren and Craig knew plenty of trades to help bring the plans to life. Darren appointed Southwest Builders London as his main contractor and hired other experts, including a carpenter, plumber and electrician, individually. During the scheme, Darren lived in one of his other properties, before moving to a nearby rental for the final few months of first fix.

The work began with the demolition of the original dormer loft and roof. The existing external solid brick walls were retained and insulated internally, to bring them up to current building standards. For the job, Kingspan PIR insulation boards were built out to around 100mm. Darren's new dormer loft was then constructed from timber frame, with a steel support system, and the new flat roof was finished with a single GRP ply membrane. The sloping roof was crafted from the same zinc that wraps the facade. "We utilised zinc as it hides the existing brickwork and provides an extra layer of weatherproofing," explains Chris.

Internally, all of the existing walls were removed, allowing for a new, open-plan layout. Since the interior features no skirting boards or architraves to conceal gaps or snags, everything had to be finished to an extreme degree of precision. "This is where some of the trades struggled a bit, in order to achieve the modern look I was aiming for," says Darren. "The details that Chris drew were quite complex, so getting the builders to complete things like the plastering and flooring to the standard we wanted was a real challenge."

The zinc roof and external cladding also proved tricky. "Each manufacturer has their own slightly different way of doing things, so the task became quite complex," says Darren. "The detailing had to be discussed and agreed on site." Instead of forming the concealed gutter in zinc, Chris instead suggested using a GRP-lined box solution, which eliminated the need for complex detailing and kept costs down.

FACT FILE

NAME Darren Young

OCCUPATION Security specialist

LOCATION South London

TYPE OF PROJECT Bungalow renovation & extension

PROJECT ROUTE Architect designed, homeowner assisted with project management & hired individual contractors

BOUGHT August 2016

HOUSE COST £700,000

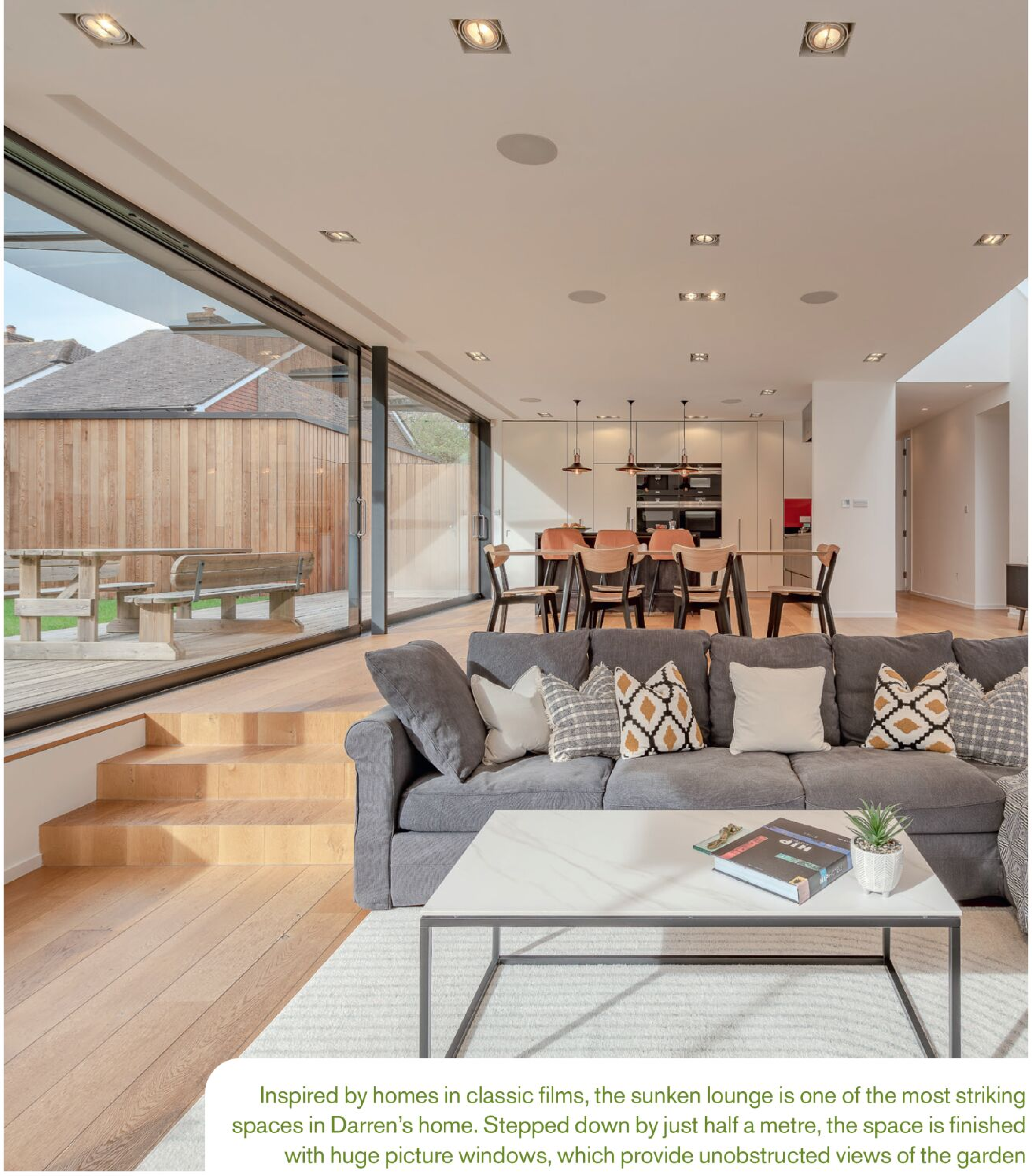
HOUSE SIZE 239m²

PROJECT COST £783,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £3,276

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED December 2016

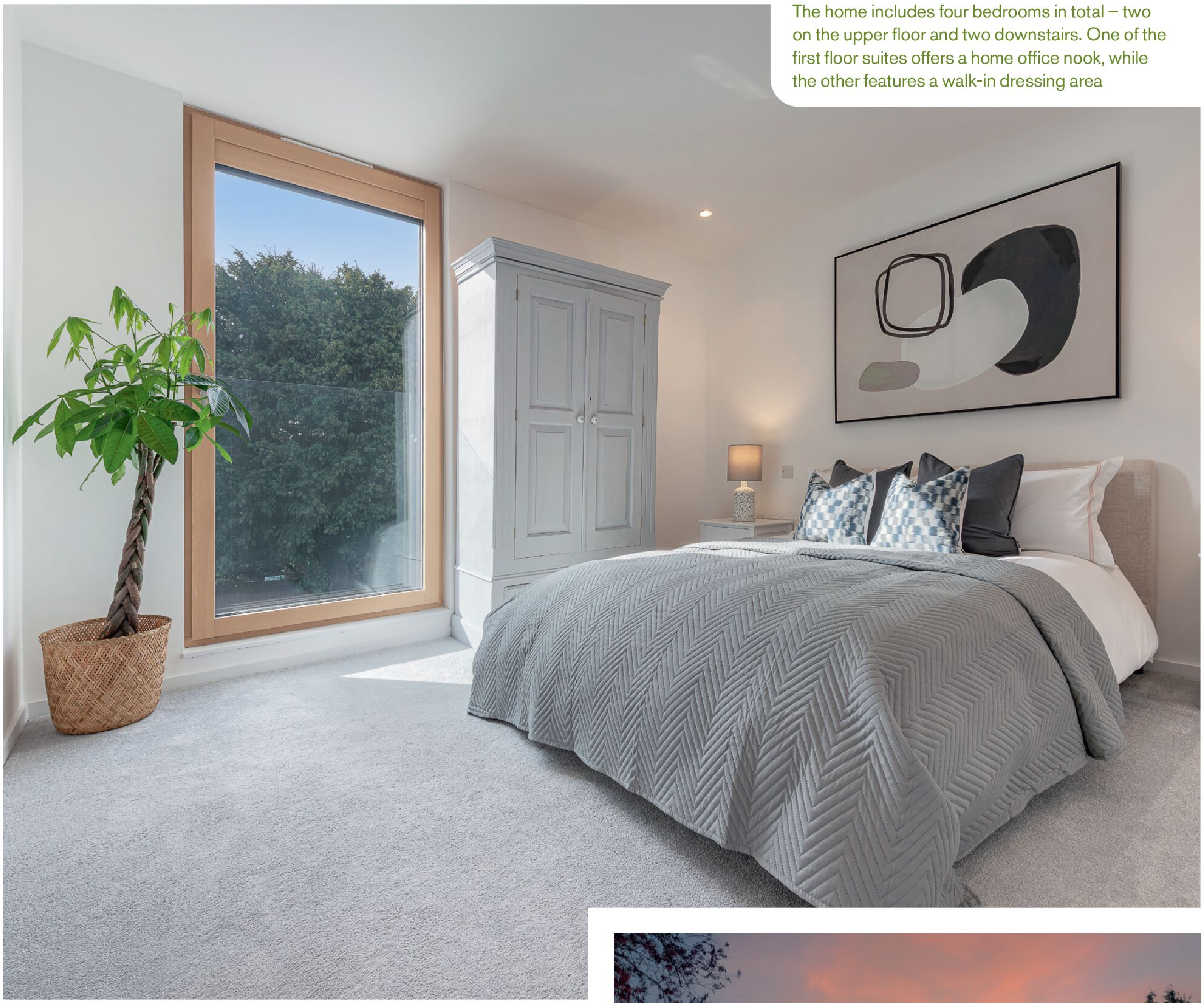
BUILDING WORK COMPLETED August 2021



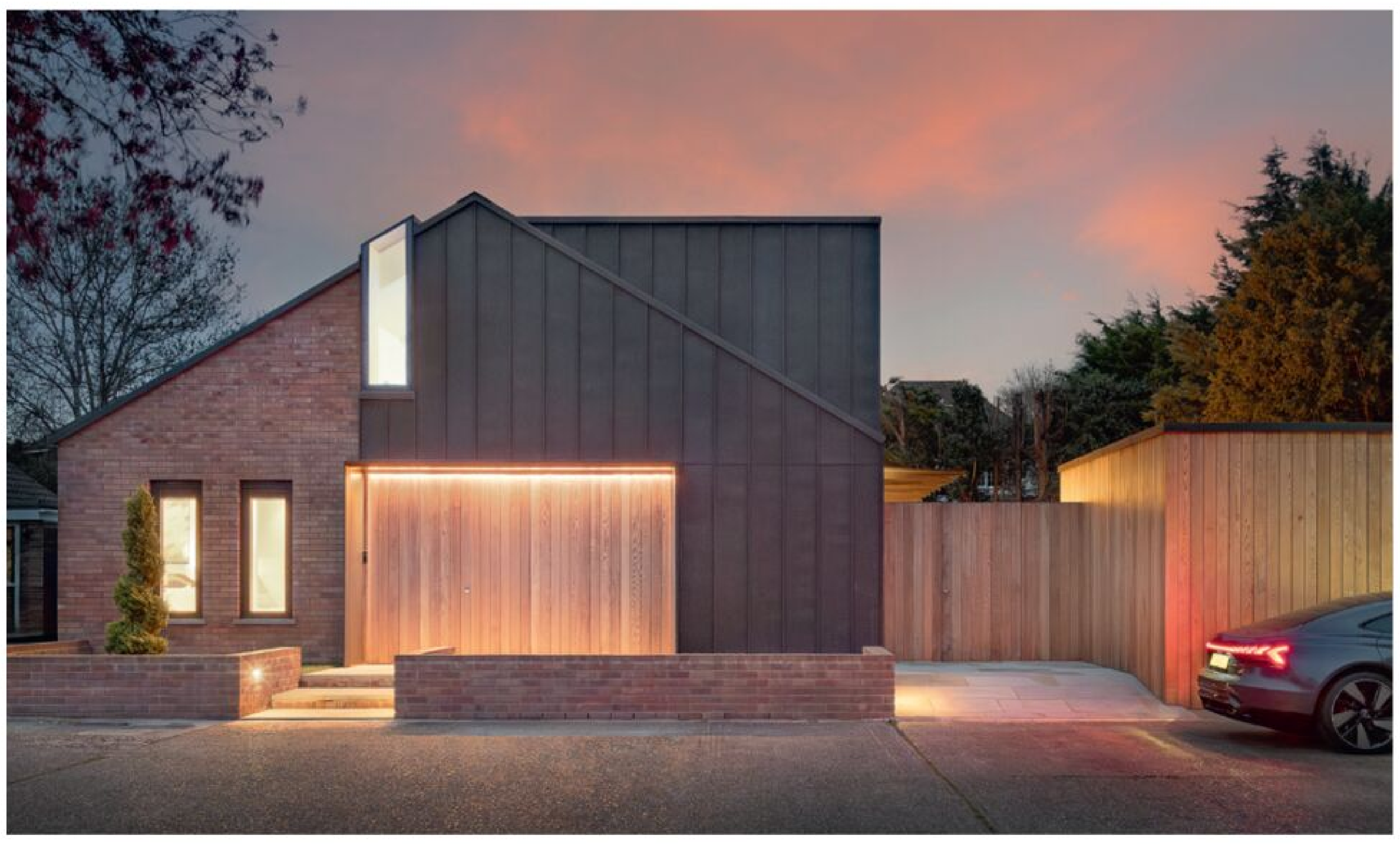
Inspired by homes in classic films, the sunken lounge is one of the most striking spaces in Darren's home. Stepped down by just half a metre, the space is finished with huge picture windows, which provide unobstructed views of the garden

With ample storage units and a handy island workspace and dining zone, the kitchen is finished with three striking pendant lights that provide brilliant task lighting

> “I didn’t understand the full impact of the work being done until structures were going up”



The home includes four bedrooms in total – two on the upper floor and two downstairs. One of the first floor suites offers a home office nook, while the other features a walk-in dressing area



After several hiccups with the chief contractor managing the project ineffectively, which caused multiple delays, Darren and Craig took on the task, with Chris acting as contract administrator. "Unfortunately, it seemed like a lot of the logistics were being handled in a haphazard manner, so we felt we had to step in," says Darren. Due to a personal setback, however, Darren had to pause the project after first fix for a significant period of time. When he was ready to resume, the internal fit out and fixtures were completed in around 14 months.

Home stretch

Nestled among very traditional bungalows, Darren's new home is a contemporary beacon, with just a few walls of the original brickwork left exposed – a subtle nod to the dwelling's origins. A striking zinc and Siberian larch envelope bring the property bang up to date, while new entrance doors from Urban Front and matching larch garage add to the home's striking finish.

The entryway opens into a bright, double-height atrium that flows through to the open-plan living area. A 9m² skylight at the top of the stairs draws natural light down into the heart of the house, while sliding glass doors connect the living space to the garden. The ground floor also offers a utility room and two guest bedrooms, as well as a WC. The staircase leads up to a spacious dormer loft, where two ensuite bedrooms and a dressing room can be found. As for interior design, a simple

I LEARNED...

LOOK FOR A CONTRACTOR who has some experience with project management, if that is the route you're taking. Everything will run far smoother with the right person in control.

COSTS CAN QUICKLY SPIRAL, so try to stick with your initial material choices where possible. It's your home and you want it to be right, but bear in mind that making changes along the way can lead to unexpected bills, as well as delays to your schedule.

WHEN UNDERTAKING A RENOVATION, you need to ensure everyone is completing the work to the standard you expect and require. You may need to step in if the quality isn't up to scratch.

palette of white paintwork, light oak timber floors and grey toned furnishings tie all the spaces together beautifully.

An excellent example of a sustainable approach to a redevelopment project, this bungalow renovation incorporates a significant amount of the original building, with high-quality glazing and insulation bringing up its thermal performance beyond Building Regulation requirements. Plus, each of the materials were chosen purposefully. "The home is clad in very durable and highly recyclable zinc," says Chris. "The timber cladding locks away CO2 and is a renewable material, and the larch should last in excess of 50 years."

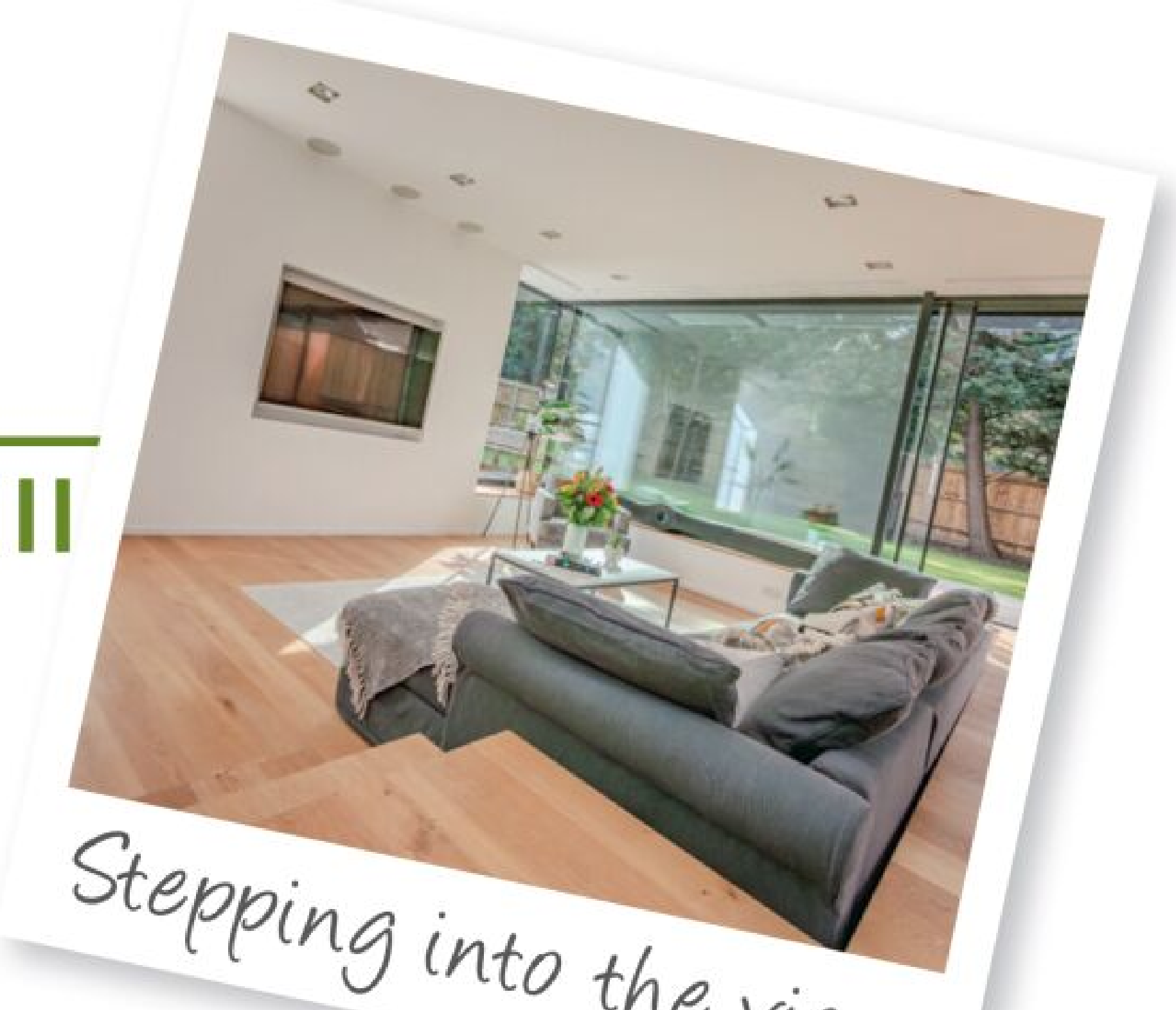
The house features a gas boiler and underfloor heating throughout, maintaining a comfortable temperature all year round. "Sometimes it's almost too warm," says Darren. "I have solar shading on the patio canopy to help with overheating." For Darren, the hardest part was managing the budget. "I didn't understand the full impact of the work being done until structures were going up," he says. "I hadn't anticipated how big the project was, and I kept running out of money." The scheme went slightly over budget, but Darren admits that was because he was fastidious about the quality of the materials and finish.

Darren says that the best part was when the work was finally complete. Being years in the making, the renovation was certainly a labour of love. "When the skylight above the staircase went in, that felt like a very significant moment. It is a rewarding memory," he says. As for his favourite part of the house, Darren loves the sunken lounge. "It's so open and has lots of light." A keen renovator, there's no doubt that Darren will tackle another project in the future, but for now he's enjoying the fruits of his labour.

Darren's master bathroom is modern and easy to maintain, finished with sleek porcelain tiles, LED lighting and a bathtub. The second upstairs bathroom features a walk-in rainforest shower with a recessed drainage system

closer look

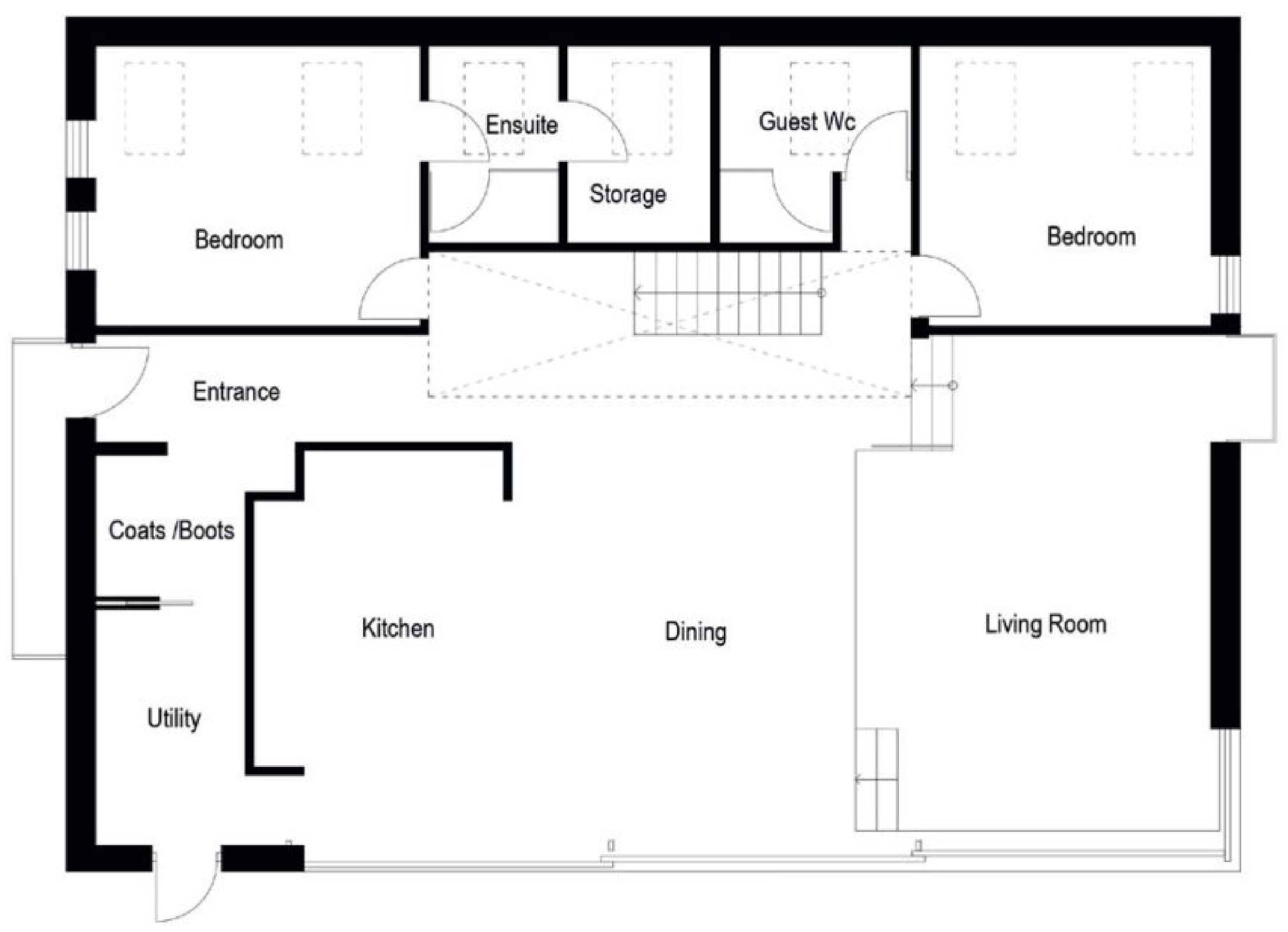
Sunken lounge


Stepping into the view

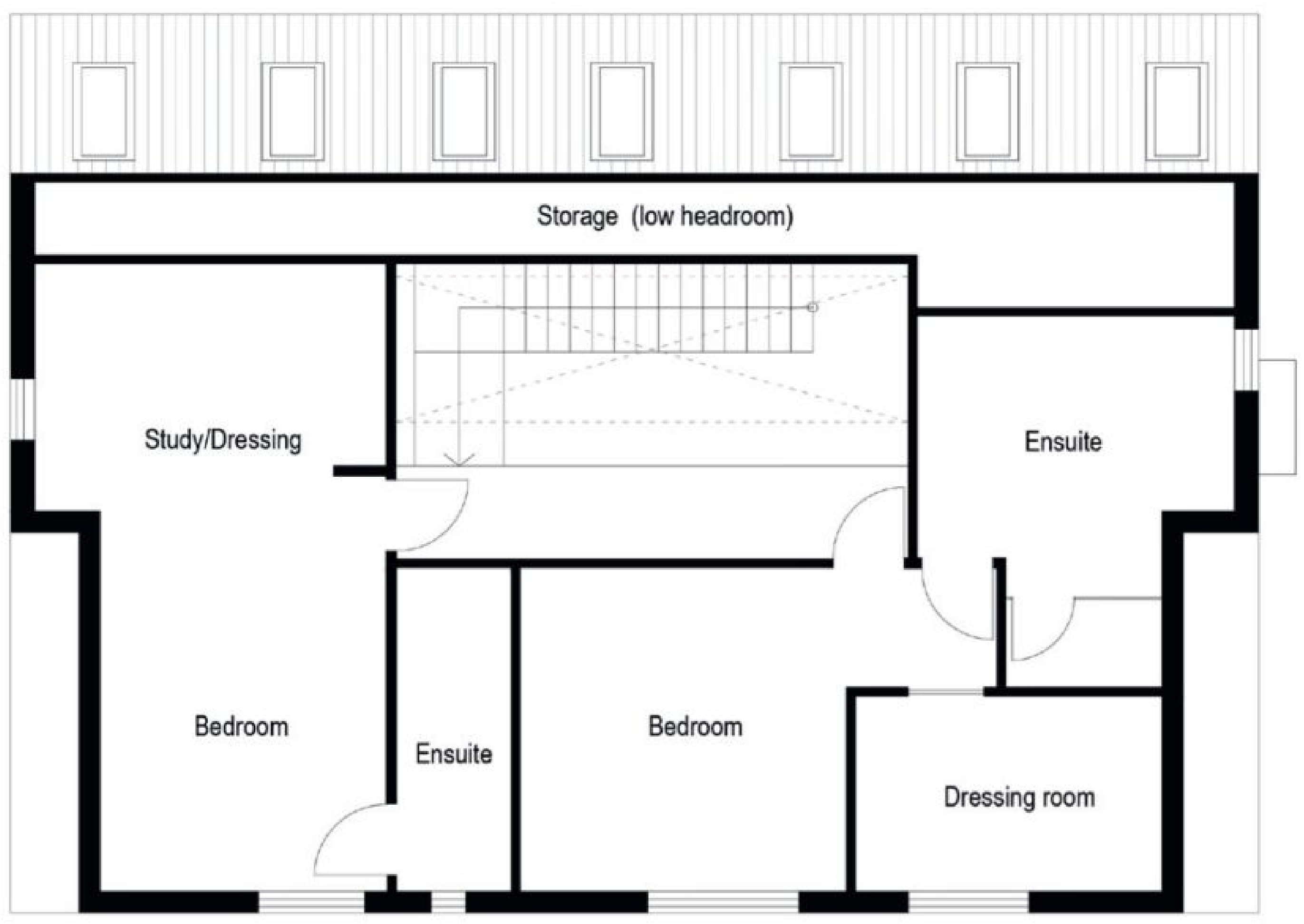
This feature is undoubtedly one of the most striking elements within Darren's home. Architect Chris Axon admits that the design was inspired by watching old movies. "I'd wanted to introduce a distinctive feature like this into the right project," he says. Since creating long sightlines to the garden was an important part of Darren's brief – helping to make the interior feel more spacious and inviting – the sunken space was ideal for this home. However, the unique element ended up being one of the biggest challenges of the project. "The ground in this part of London is clay-heavy, so water doesn't drain away quickly," says Darren. "If it rained excessively, the garden would become waterlogged, so the sunken lounge had to be protected from water ingress." The floor in this area of the living space was lowered by 0.5m, before waterproof concrete and a protective membrane were installed. French drains were also added around the perimeter, to redirect subsoil and surface water away from the house, with the help of gravity.

Floor plans

Ground floor



First floor



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Preliminaries	£63	2%	£15,000
Foundations	£209	6%	£50,000
External walls & windows	£1,046	32%	£250,000
Roof structure & covering	£335	10%	£80,000
Internal walls	£100	3%	£24,000
Floor, wall & ceiling finishes	£167	5%	£40,000
Joinery & fittings	£251	8%	£60,000
Plumbing & heating (incl bathroom & kitchen)	£117	4%	£28,000
Electrics	£167	5%	£40,000
Decorating	£151	5%	£36,000
Structural engineer	£167	5%	£40,000
Fees	£293	9%	£70,000
External works	£209	6%	£50,000
Grand total			**£783,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

ARCHITECT **Craft Architects** 020 8037 9322 www.craftarchitects.co.uk MAIN CONTRACTOR **Southwest Builders London** 020 8395 4482 www.southwestbuilders.co.uk STRUCTURAL ENGINEER **Mosaic Civic & Structural Engineers** 020 8658 3403 www.mosaiccse.com ZINC CLADDING & ROOF **Rheinzink** 01276 686725 www.rheinzink.co.uk INSULATION **Kingspan** 01544 388601 www.kingspan.com ROOFLIGHTS **The Rooflight Company** 01993 833155 www.therooflightco.com WINDOWS **Internorm** www.internorm.com WINDOW INSTALLATION **At-Eco** 01732 867043 www.at-eco.co.uk BESPOKE GLASS **Vision Architectural Glazing Installations** 01223 907850 www.visionarch.co.uk GARAGE & FRONT DOOR **Urban Front** 01494 778787 www.urbanfront.com

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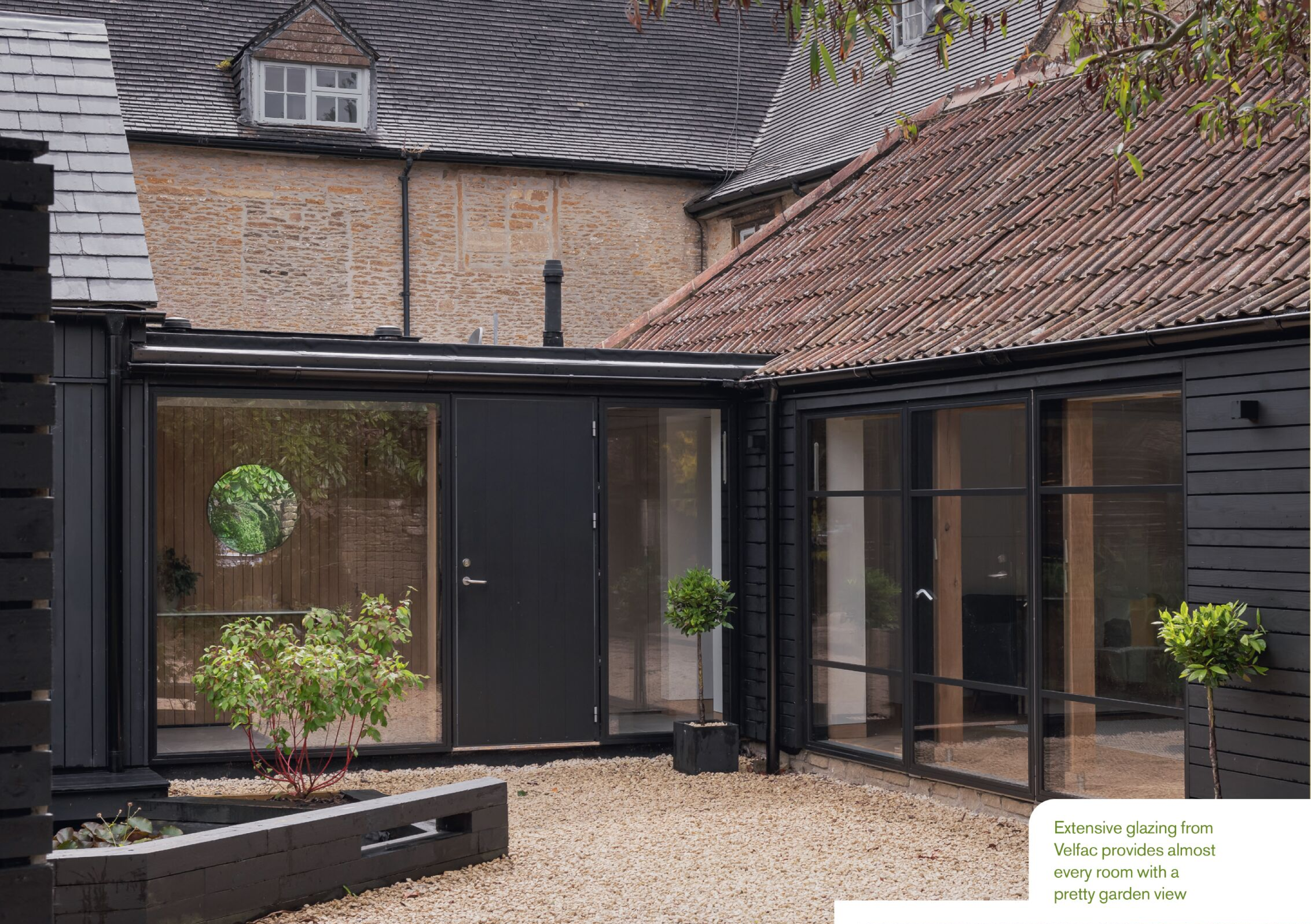


Extensive glazing from Velfac provides almost every room with a pretty garden view

DESIGNED FOR LIVING

Rhodri and Meinir Jones took a DIY approach to transforming their tiny one-bedroom barn conversion into a light-filled family home

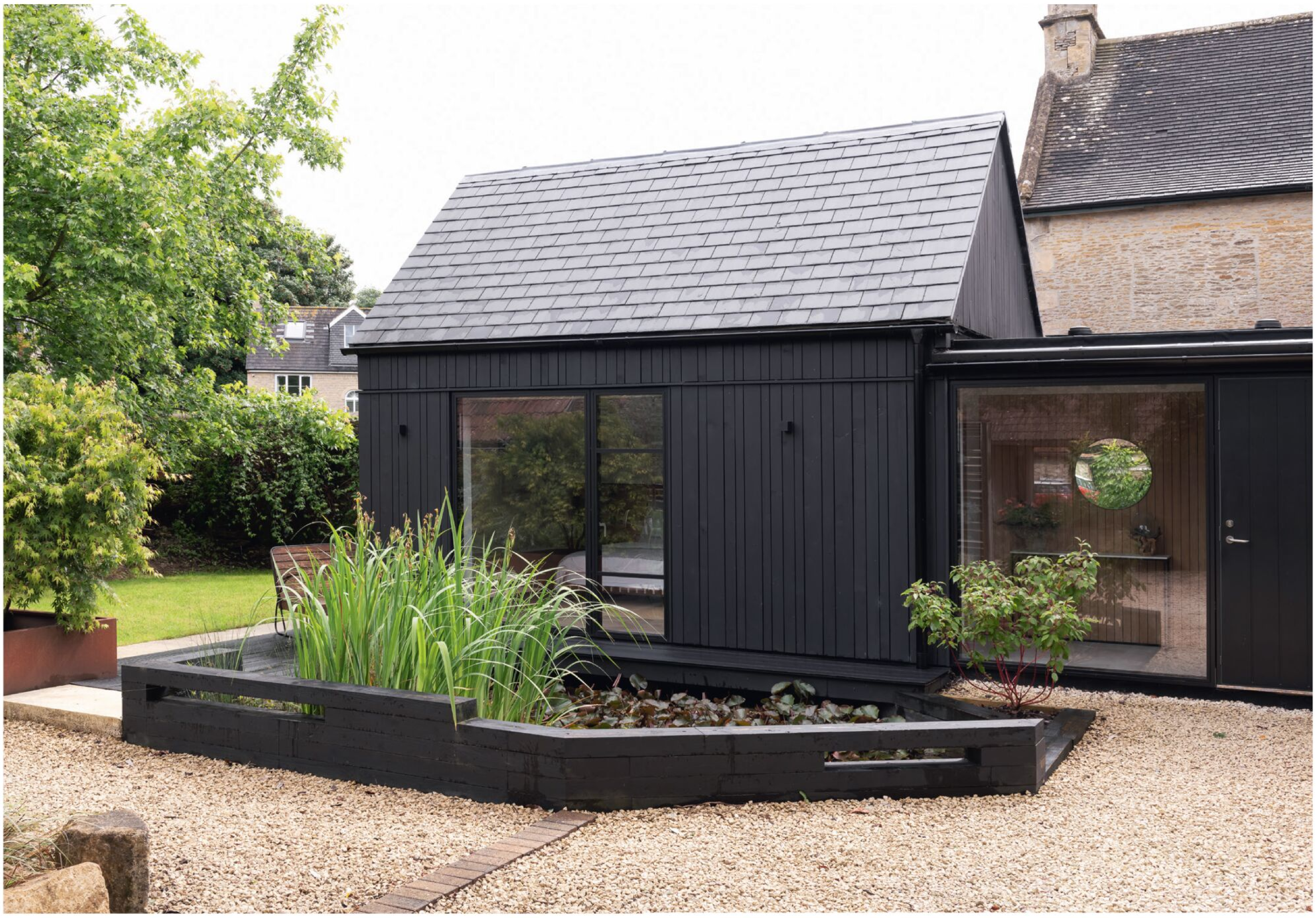
WORDS **ALEXANDRA PRATT** PHOTOS **PETE HELME**

When Rhodri and Meinir Jones moved from west Wales to Wiltshire for Meinir's teaching career, they lived in a small, rented property. Over the years that followed, they built a new business and a new life, as well as starting family. After a decade living in the area, they purchased their rental home – which they have transformed into a smart and practical family house that's filled with light and has a strong connection to the garden.

Originally converted in the 1960s, the stone-built barn was damp, cramped and dark, thanks to a huge willow. After a storm brought down the tree – miraculously missing the barn – the landlord asked Rhodri and Meinir if they wanted to buy the property. "It is south facing, set in a walled garden, very private and was in our price range," recalls Rhodri. "We'd have been mad not to say yes."

Crafting the plans

As an architectural designer, Rhodri was perfectly suited to the challenge of renovating and extending the property. He and Meinir, the owners of Elements Studio, went through 30 iterations of the design over the next four years, honing and reflecting on their requirements. "We had so many ideas to condense down," he says. "Then we had to match these with the physical possibilities, planning rules and our budget. It was a long process, but it was very important."



The couple's design ethos is that small buildings need to be coordinated and calm, plus they are huge fans of Scandi design principles. The modest garden space was integral to scheme. The property is located on the edge of a small village with surrounding dwellings, but the garden is private, and the barn faces over it. "Landscape design was critical to the development," says Rhodri. "I completed the garden plan before I did the internal drawings, and all the rooms connect to this outside space."

During the design and construction process, a key challenge was the barn's location within the curtilage of a listed building, requiring compliance with strict planning regulations. To meet requirements, the extension incorporates both a flat roof section and a pitched slate roof, contrasting with the original barn's clay tiles. This design intentionally creates the appearance of multiple smaller structures rather than a single large bungalow. The use of slate, commonly found on nearby service buildings, further helps the extension blend harmoniously with its surroundings.

Getting out of the ground

Rhodri chose structural insulated panels (SIPs) as the build method for the extension. "It's well-engineered, precise and I put the shell up in just three days," he says. Yet there were challenges, including the need to underpin the neighbour's boundary wall, which came as an unwelcome surprise on day two. The extension lies less than a metre from the same border, so it also demanded specific fire-proofing measures, including a layer of cement fibreboard and an extra coating of fire-retardant. The groundworks for the foundations were complicated by tree roots, too, which required what Rhodri calls: "A significantly engineered slab."

The most significant challenge, though, and the primary cause of delays during the project, was managing surface water drainage.

FACT FILE

NAMES Rhodri & Meinir Jones

OCCUPATIONS Architectural designer/contractor & teacher

LOCATION Wiltshire

TYPE OF PROJECT Extension & renovation

PROJECT ROUTE DIY design & build, with sub-contractors

STYLE Contemporary addition to traditional stone barn

CONSTRUCTION METHOD SIPs

PROPERTY COST £240,000

BOUGHT 2015

HOUSE SIZE 190m² (incl outbuilding)

PROJECT COST £124,000

PROJECT COST PER M² £653

TOTAL COST £364,000

BUILDING WORK COMMENCED May 2020

BUILDING WORK TOOK 156 weeks

CURRENT VALUE £550,000

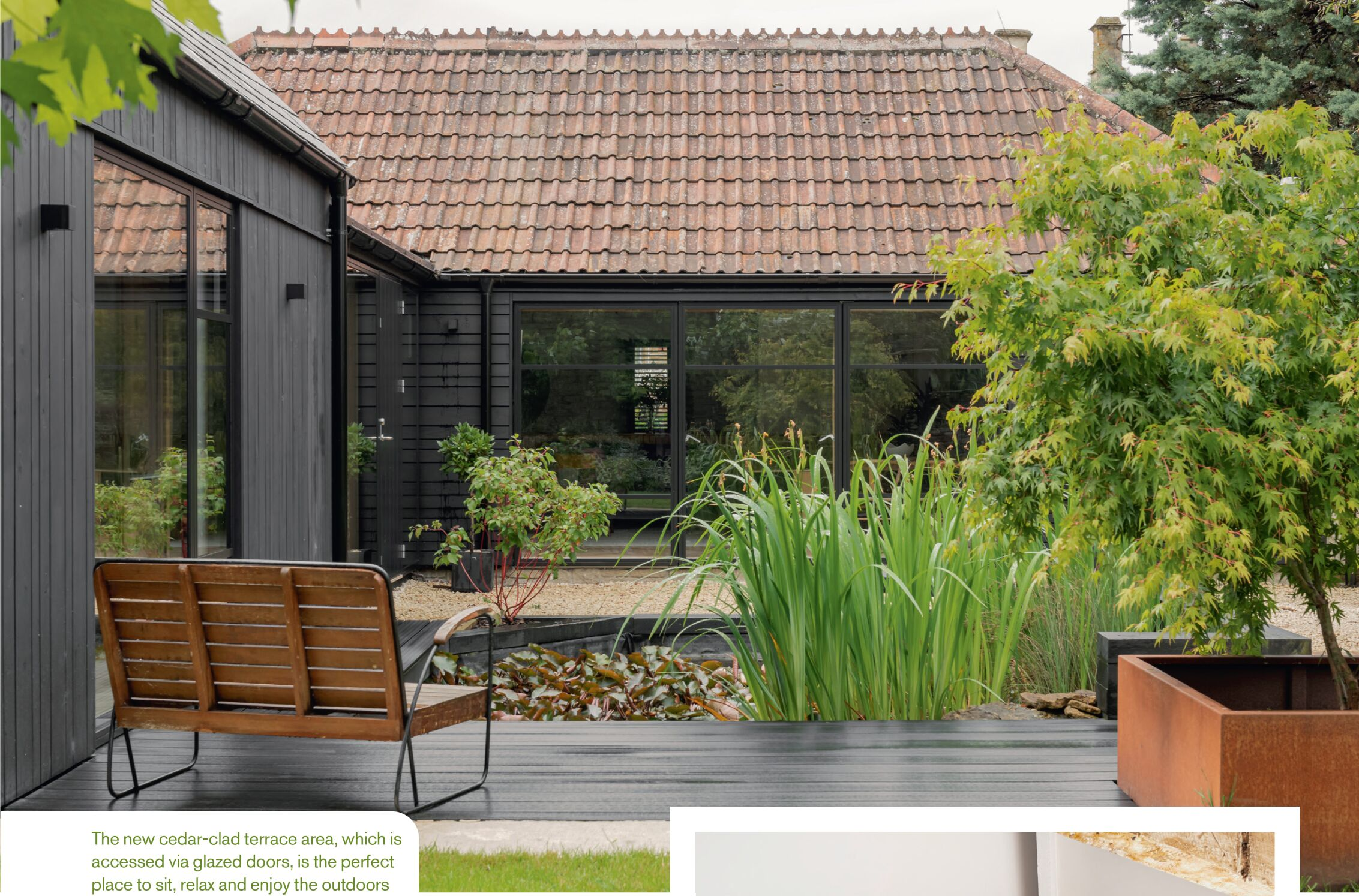
Quality was important to Rhodri and Meinir, who chose sanitaryware from Rak, Grohe and Lusso Stone. The shower and taps are matt black

While far less glamorous than architectural or interior design decisions, effective drainage planning is critical to the success of any project. The site of Rhodri and Meinir's barn presented an additional complication: high bedrock levels that made traditional solutions difficult. Rhodri initially proposed using the existing pond for water attenuation, but this was not permitted. Instead, a tank system was required, which collects rainwater for reuse in flushing toilets and irrigating the garden, while excess water is carefully pumped into the mains drainage system at controlled volumes to prevent overloading.

Determining the appropriate tank size caused a significant three-and-a-half-month delay, as Rhodri worked to find an affordable and practical solution. The final system includes a 7,500-litre tank buried in the garden, designed to mitigate downstream flooding. Its size was calculated using a formula that factors in normal runoff, a once-in-a-century storm event, and a 30% margin for the effects of climate change. "We had to strike a balance," Rhodri says. "The tank is one-fifth the size of the extension we built." Despite the challenges, the solution effectively combines environmental responsibility with functionality.

Despite these complications, there were still lots of great elements. As well as the original structure being stable and well-built, Rhodri discovered that the roof was sufficiently insulated. He chose not to do anything to the thick stone walls, as wrapping them would mean the structure would no longer have been able to breathe. He also opted not to dig up the building's floors, and instead decided to install conventional radiators behind the half-height oak panelling that runs the length of the open-plan living and dining areas. The extension, by contrast, features space-saving underfloor heating (UFH).

In addition to being the designer and project manager, Rhodri was also the builder. Though his professional life provided him with some relevant skills, the couple still needed electricians and plumbers, groundworkers, a roofer and drainage experts. "The sheer labour of completing all the remaining work nearly killed me," says Rhodri, who will hire someone to do the tiling and floor laying if he and Meinir ever tackle another project. "I worked full weekends and every evening for two years. I developed project



The new cedar-clad terrace area, which is accessed via glazed doors, is the perfect place to sit, relax and enjoy the outdoors

The contemporary cladding brings all elements of the property together and emphasises the integration of all the rooms, whether interior or exterior

The couple specified a mix of off-the-shelf cabinetry and handmade elements to add personality to their kitchen space

fatigue and there were some dark days," he says. With the work progressing in clear stages, the couple never moved out, although there was a short period when they had to live off takeaways.

Sun-soaked home

The result of the couple's efforts is a beautifully renovated barn, featuring composite-framed glazing that opens onto the garden. The garden-facing wall, previously a later addition of infill concrete block, was replaced to enhance both aesthetics and functionality. A single-storey extension, positioned at a right angle to this area along the boundary with a neighboring property, introduces a new main entrance, bathroom, dressing room and a vaulted master bedroom. The entire exterior, including the original barn, is clad in black-stained British cedar, creating a cohesive, modern aesthetic.

Sustainability was a key priority for Rhodri, but a shortage of air source heat pumps at the time led to the installation of a gas boiler. However, the house is pre-wired for a future upgrade to heat pump technology. Rhodri plans to add solar panels to the flat roof in the future, though the barn's listed status will make this a challenging process. The property now features two bedrooms, as Rhodri felt adding more would have been excessive. A former stone-built artist's studio in the garden has been repurposed as a utility room and guest suite. Outdoor amenities include additional storage, a covered dining terrace, and landscaped zones with a Japanese-inspired design, incorporating planted areas, a pond, and lawned spaces. This thoughtful integration of indoor and outdoor areas has transformed the property into a unified domestic space, where the garden plays as vital a role in daily life as the barn itself.

WE LEARNED...

PLAN YOUR PROJECT well and don't change your mind. We almost altered some of the plans; but had to remind ourselves we'd reached the best decisions possible over the four years of planning.

BUDGET REALISTICALLY and don't spend your money in the wrong places. Plus, make sure you have a contingency fund.

DON'T RUSH. If you're renovating, live in the property first and work out what you like, what you don't and where the best light is.

CONSTRUCTION LOGISTICS were a challenge for us, especially with the shared driveway. Communication is essential, and we tried to be considerate and efficient, as well as keeping neighbours up to date with bulletins and newsletters.

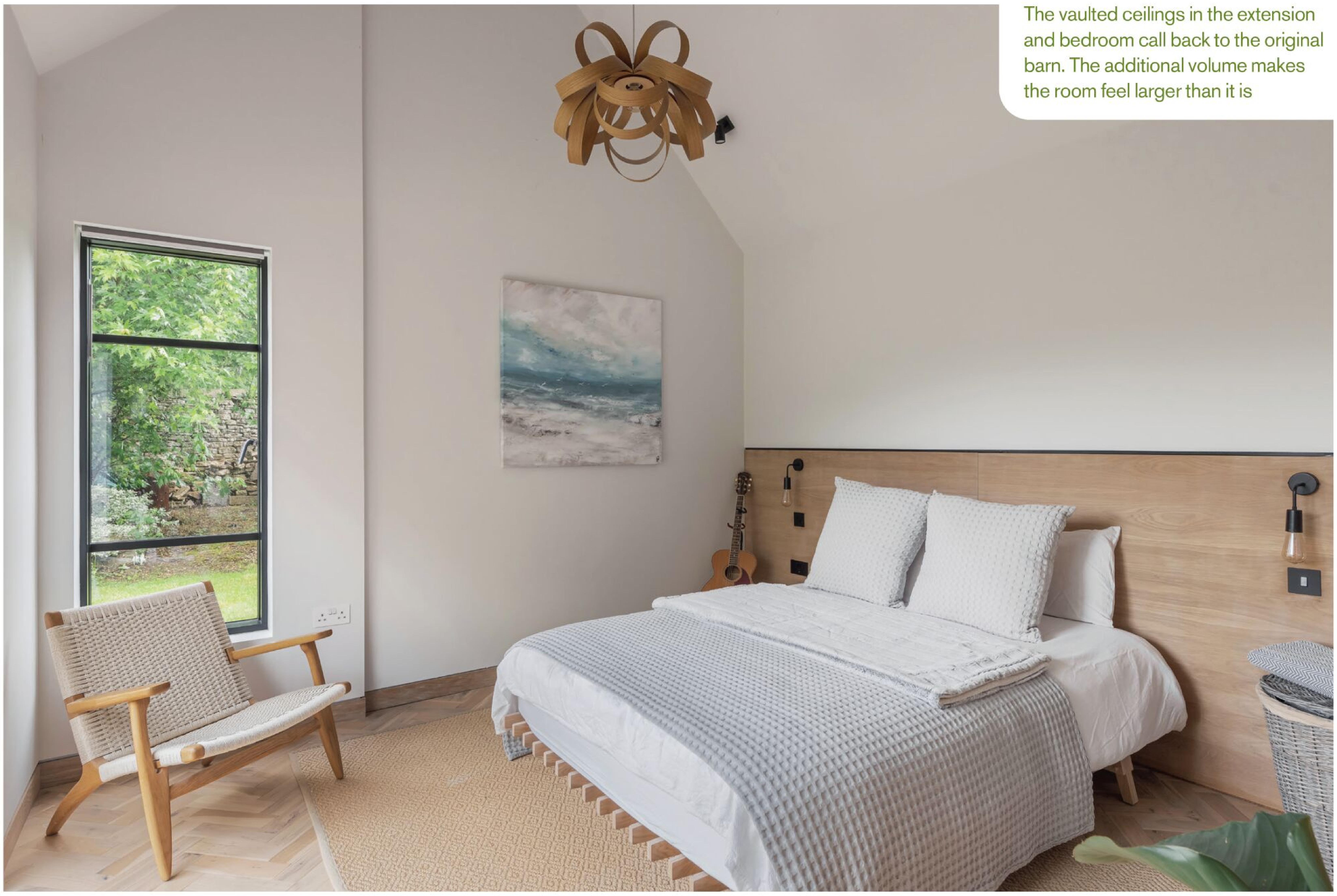
Finishing touches

The new, spacious kitchen now fills one end of the original barn, with gorgeous, exposed roof timbers adding real character to the space. The kitchen cabinets came from a local supplier, with some handmade elements by Rhodri himself, such as the shelves, which he crafted from the old timber worktops. The new countertop is 20mm quartz, which looks like Carrara marble, but was the more practical, affordable choice for the couple.

The interior design ties the old and the new spaces together. There is a big focus on natural materials, including engineered oak floors. These were chosen for their tactile nature and stability, particularly as Rhodri was unsure of the moisture content of the original subfloor. The simple palette of European oak finished in matt Osmo Oil and Dulux's Ash White paint complement both the old barn and the contemporary feel of the extension. Matt black showers and taps create standout features in the compact wet zones, both of which are illuminated by rooflights in the flat roof.

"It's very calm and minimalist," says Rhodri. "We use art for adding some colour." Rhodri even chose the interior features and finishes, with Meinir leaving most of the decision making up to him. "It's great as we have really similar tastes," she says. "I was very trusting – except for the artwork. I chose that!"

With the barn's completion only crossing the finishing line a couple of months before the arrival of baby Steffan, this is now a truly happy family abode. According to Meinir, Steffan doesn't like going into dark rooms, as he's so accustomed to seeing the sky from every room in his new home. "The first two weeks after he was born, Meinir was housebound," says Rhodri. "Yet she didn't feel it, as there are so many different areas to enjoy. This project has helped facilitate family life. Even though it's small in plan, we have everything we need."

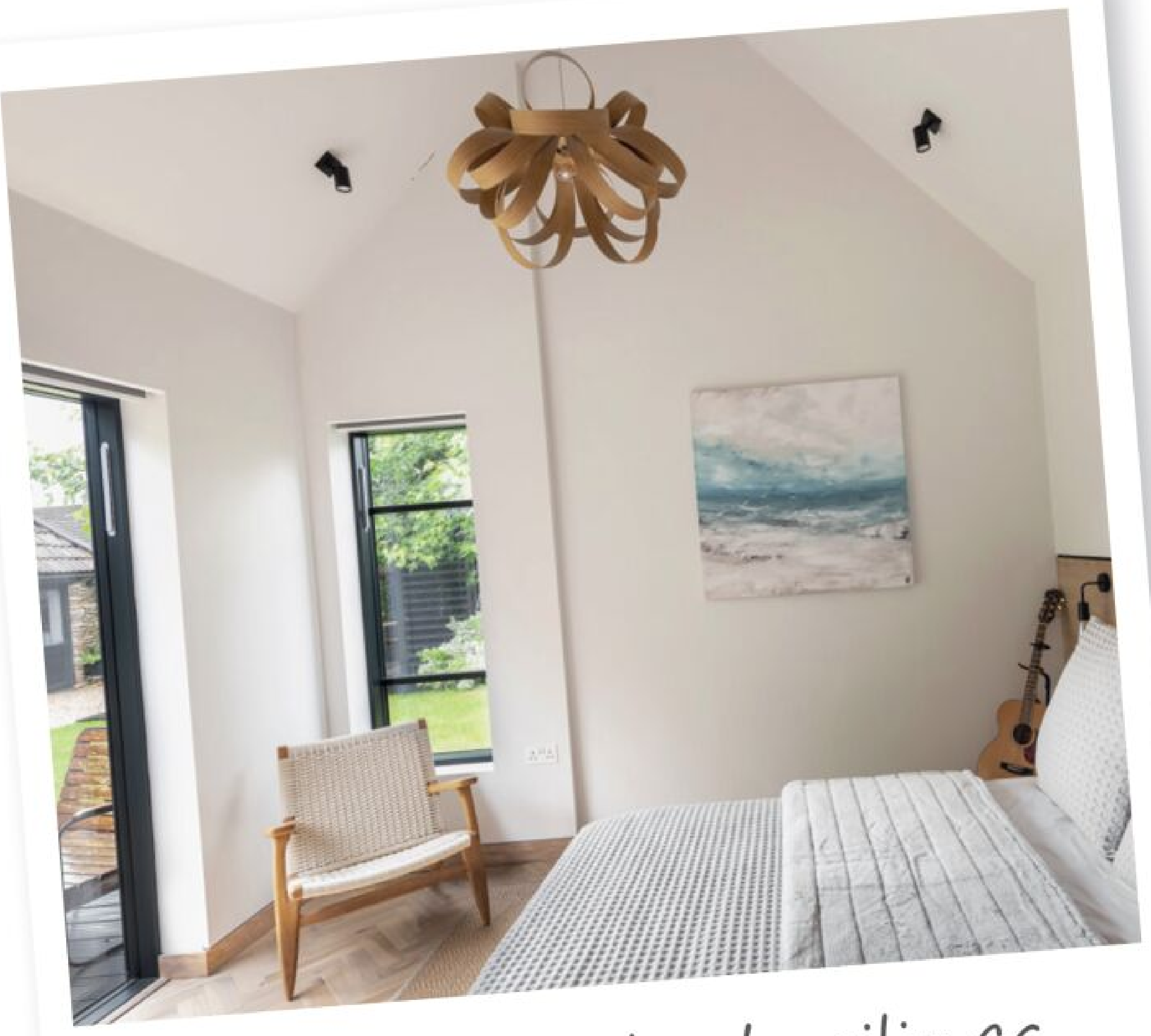


The vaulted ceilings in the extension and bedroom call back to the original barn. The additional volume makes the room feel larger than it is

closer look

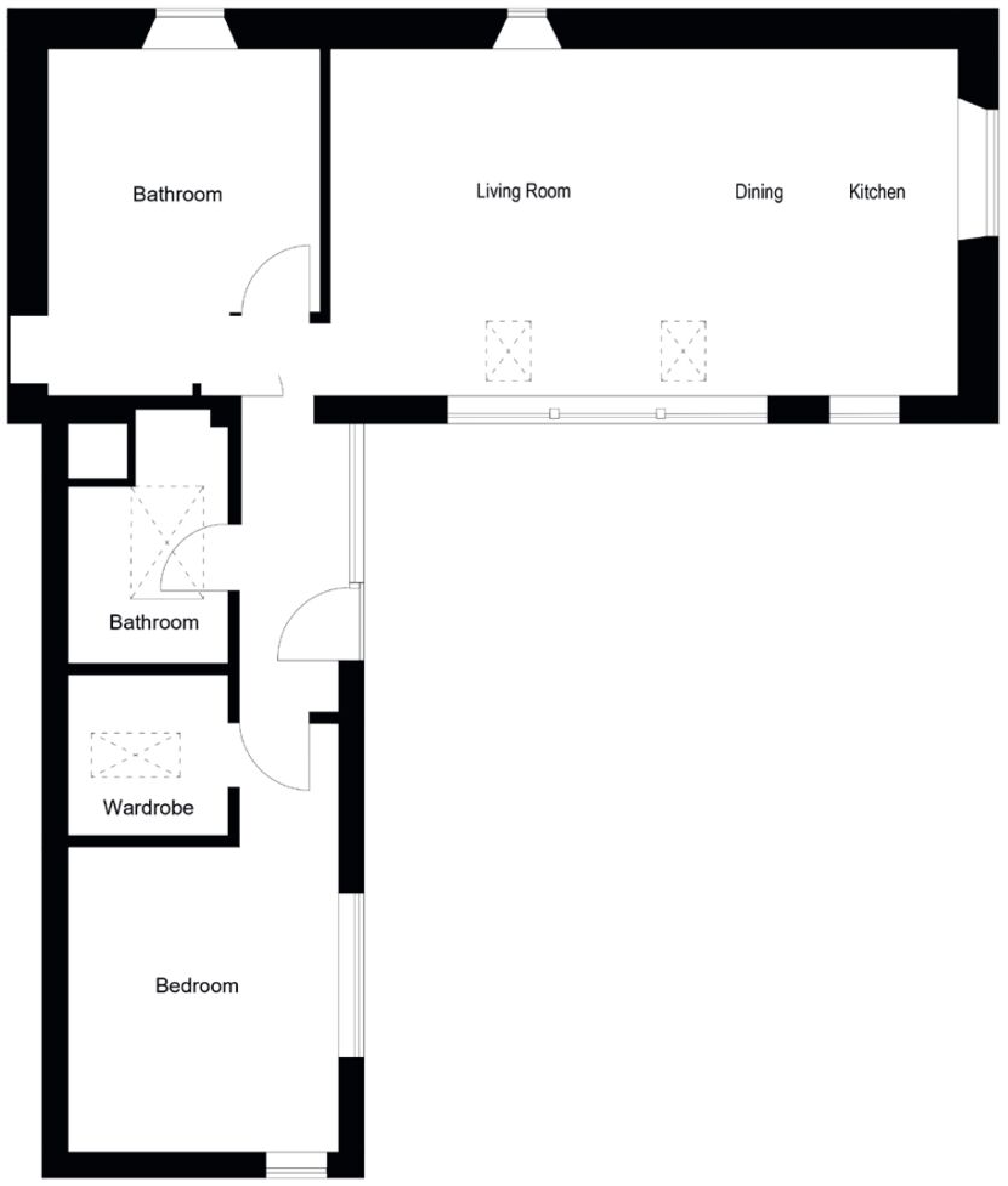
Maximising space & volume with SIPs

After deciding against more traditional building methods, Rhodri built the extension using structural insulated panels (SIPs), as they're strong and lightweight, as well as offering great insulation and airtightness. Plus, if supplied as a kit only, they can be erected on a DIY basis. The panels themselves are made from two layers of structural timber sheets, with insulation sandwiched in between. They can be used to form the roof, as well as the walls. This means more space, as the need for roof trusses becomes redundant – ideal in a compact building like Rhodri and Meinir's barn conversion, where it was important to maximise every nook and cranny.



Creating vaulted ceilings

Floor plans



TOTAL BUILD COST BREAKDOWN

Elements	Cost m²	Cost %	Total cost
Groundworks	£63	10%	£12,000
Drainage (incl rainwater harvesting & pump station)	£37	6%	£7,000
Hard & soft landscaping	£53	8%	£10,000
SIPs frame	£68	10%	£13,000
Glazing	£84	13%	£16,000
Cladding	£32	5%	£6,000
Roofing	£42	6%	£8,000
Electrical & mechanical	£53	8%	£10,000
Floor finishes	£26	4%	£5,000
Internal finishes & decoration	£53	8%	£10,000
Interior joinery	£63	10%	£12,000
Miscellaneous	£79	12%	£15,000
Grand total			**£124,000**

Note: The costs shown here reflect the original prices for materials, labour and services at the time this project was undertaken. As a general guide, inflation in the construction market runs at about 3%-4% per annum.

Useful contacts

DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE, SUPPLY & FIT OF INTERNAL JOINERY **Elements Studio** 01225 851880 www.theelementsstudio.com SIPS FRAME **SIPS@Clays** 01756 799498 www.clays.com ROOFING **PR Roofing Specialists** 01225 710153 CLADDING **Vastern Timber** 01793 853281 www.vastern.co.uk GLAZING **Velfac Windows** 01480 759510 www.velfac.co.uk ELECTRICIAN **Image Electrical** 07713 067008 TILED WALLS & FLOORS **Mandarin Stone** 01600 715444 www.mandarinstone.com ENGINEERED WOOD FLOORING **Luxury Flooring** www.luxuryflooringandfurnishings.co.uk KITCHEN CABINETRY **Leekes** 0333 222 4120 www.leekes.co.uk COUNTERTOP **Marbleworks of Bath** 01225 780062 www.marbleworksofbath.com SANITARYWARE **Lusso Stone** 020 3370 4057 www.lussostone.com **Rak** 01730 237850 www.rakceramics.com **Grohe** 020 8283 2840 www.grohe.co.uk PAINT **Dulux** 0333 222 7171 www.dulux.co.uk WOOD TREATMENT **Osmo** 01296 481220 www.osmouk.com

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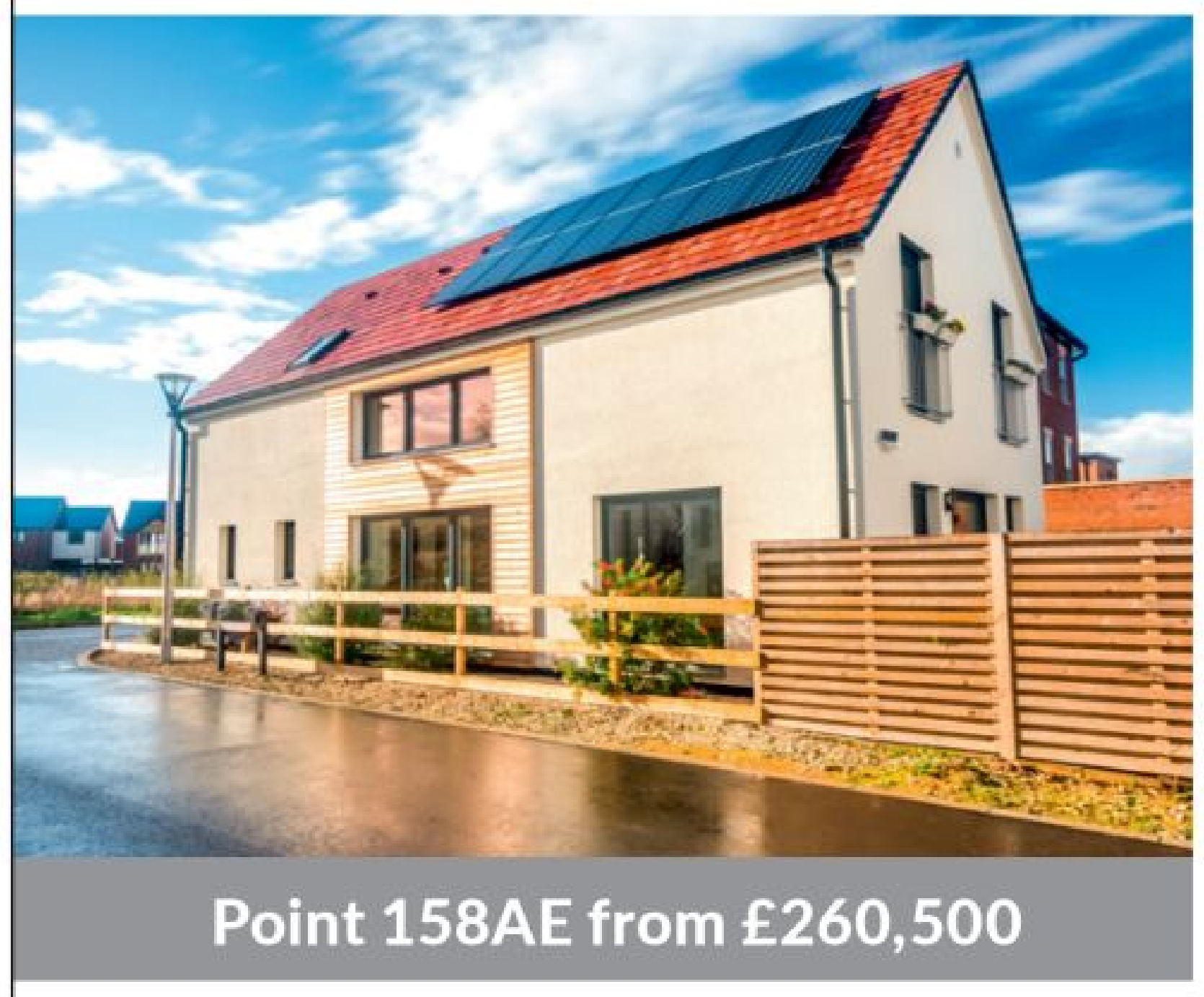

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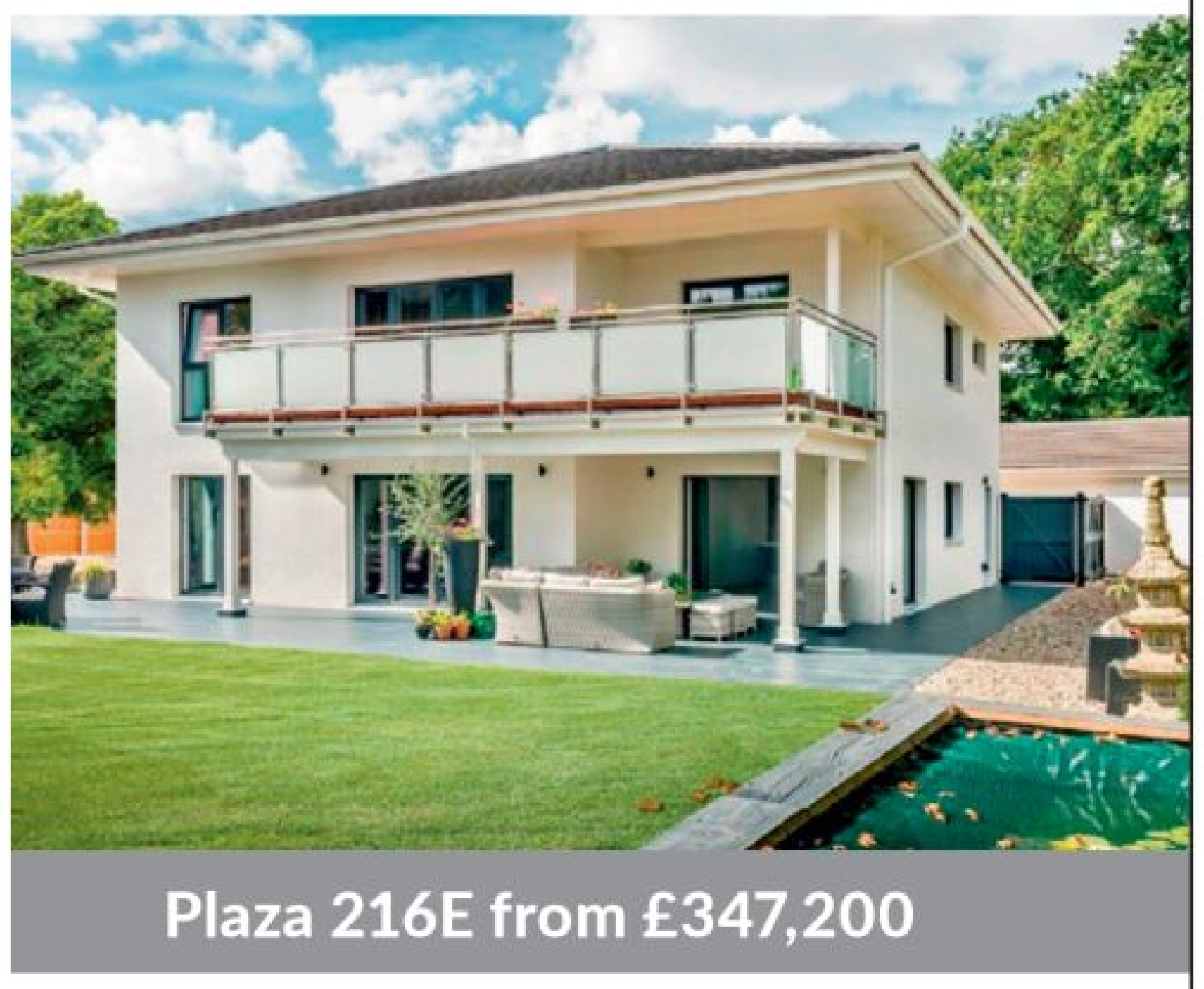

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STARTING YOUR SELF BUILD IN 2025

MARTIN GARDNER

Right: Helyer Davies Architects (www.hdarchitects.co.uk) developed the design for this replacement dwelling in Hampshire. When setting out their budget, the owners prioritised expansive areas of glazing so they could maximise the coastal views. They also made sure they had enough money set aside to incorporate a selection of renewable tech, including solar panels and a ground source heat pump

Below: For the owners of this infill house in South London, creating a home to downsize to in their existing garden provided a more attractive route to self building than searching for a plot on the open market. Whittaker Parsons (www.whittakerparsons.com) crafted the design scheme

Simplify the journey to creating your dream home this year, by following Mark Stevenson's top tips on everything from tracking down the perfect plot of land to finding a great builder

Creating a bespoke home is a project lots of people aspire to. But with ever increasing red tape and technical requirements, is it really something that can be done? Well, yes – and here's how to go about it. Of course, there's no denying it – building takes a lot of hard work, requiring careful planning and commitment. From setting a budget to finding a plot and breaking ground, each stage is vital in making the self build dream happen. Here's my practical step by step guide.

FRENCH + TYE

Setting the budget

The budget is the foundation of any self build scheme. Without it, even the best-laid plans can fall apart. Projects often take years to get going, and inflation can make what seemed like a solid allowance feel much tighter. That's why the first step is to validate your build costs and ensure that your goals are realistic and achievable.

Start by nailing down your brief and any special requirements. It's easy to get carried away with trends and upgrades – but focus on the essentials. Do your research, separate the must-haves from the nice-to-haves and be ready to compromise if needed. Visiting self build shows, like Build It Live (www.builditlive.co.uk), can be a great way to explore the latest tech and get expert advice firsthand.

Your budget should cover everything, from the foundations and structural system to finishing touches and site management costs. Keep in mind that over half of your overall spend will typically go towards building the superstructure. Focus on the major expenses that deliver the most value, but don't overlook the smaller costs – they can, and will, add up.

Funding the build

Securing self build finance can feel overwhelming, with strict lending rules and intense scrutiny. However, understanding how the project will be funded is crucial to keeping everything flowing smoothly. If you need a mortgage, start the process early. Once you have a mortgage offer, plan the cashflow and review the terms carefully. There'll be rules to follow and drawing down funds might take longer than you expect.

Finding a plot

Your self build journey begins with securing the perfect piece of land. While the search might seem daunting, with persistence and a reliable strategy, you'll soon find the right site. The best place to start is to decide what your ideal plot looks like. Consider its size, location, and the type of home you want to build. If you're dreaming of a stone-clad cottage, focus on areas where this style is common.

Understanding the market is essential when looking for land, so once you know where you want to build, research plot prices, local planning policies and trends. PlotBrowser.com is an ideal starting point. Speaking with

Far left: Thanks to its position in an urban conservation area, the design of this contemporary new home had to meet numerous local planning guidelines to get the green light from the local council. Studio AVC (www.studioavc.com) developed a scheme that blends traditional features of the surrounding Victorian architecture with modern details and materials

Left: Artel31 (www.artel31.co.uk) produced the design for this modern home and were briefed to create plans for a futureproof house that'd be suitable for the owners after retirement. This house is the result; featuring an H-shaped floorplan that balances the need for privacy in the living areas while allowing plenty of natural light in

architects, planners and builders can also help you understand local drivers and reveal opportunities that might not be on the open market.

To increase your chances of success, sign up to one of Build It's training courses (self-build.co.uk/training) to find out how to track down and appraise a site. Remember, the perfect piece of land is rare so be prepared to compromise. Prioritise what matters to you most, and be flexible with the less important details.

Appraising a plot

Once you've found what seems to be the perfect patch of land, now comes the critical question: will you actually be allowed to build a home on it? Appraising the site's potential is vital to avoid costly surprises. A thorough assessment will look at the planning potential, as well as identifying any construction risks so they can be factored into the purchase price.

Planning consent

Land either comes with existing planning consent or needs approval. While sites with permission are less risky, you'll need to confirm the design suits your needs. If changes are necessary, consider how easy it will be to get approval for amendments. For consented plots, check:

Type of permission: Is it outline (more flexibility) or full (specific design approved)?

Expiry date: Ensure the permission won't lapse before you get started on the building work.

Planning conditions: These could include flood mitigation, access requirements, or dealing with ecology issues. The key is to understand what's involved.

For land without consent, the risks are higher, so consult a planning professional to assess its potential before making a purchase. Ideally, make sure the plot is within settlement boundaries or has a designation that is more likely to win approval. It's essential that your plans fit with the surroundings, so have a good idea of what you want to build and check it won't negatively impact neighbours. All sites have constraints, so your local planning department will consider things like protected species, flood risk or unsafe access. These can make plots undevelopable or expensive to deal with. If in doubt, request a pre-application meeting with the council. While not binding, it offers insights into the site's likelihood of approval and ways to boost your chances.

Choosing the designer

As a self builder, your job is to provide a design brief and clearly set out your budget. It's up to you to appoint the professional who puts your plans together, so look for someone who is interested, within your budget, shares your vision and has the competence to create what you want to build. The right individual doesn't have to be a traditional

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

2025 is an interesting time for self build and some would say there's never been a better time to create your own home. On the upside, the government continues to support this route to house ownership, so the pressure is mounting on local authorities to meet the demand established by the right to build registers. This means that we're likely to see more supportive planning policies to unlock self building and more opportunities to create customised dwellings as part of larger developer sites.

While this sounds positive, we must remember that the industry continues to settle down from turbulent economic events post-pandemic. Hyperinflation has been a problem. However, for the past 12 months construction costs have flat lined and inflation is now under control. After a period of stagnation, house prices are also now set to increase.

Whether we like it or not, the sector faces a number of regulatory changes which are set to impact the future of house building. Firstly, there's the Building Safety Act which is intended to improve building safety. Then there's the UK's carbon reduction commitment, which is top of the agenda. As the Future Homes Standards continue to be applied, we should expect regulatory changes to Building Regulations to improve energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of new properties.

For anyone looking to start their self build journey now, you're unlikely to be developing your new home until 2026. Your projects will need to meet the new regulations, so be prepared to incorporate the latest technologies, which will be showcased at the Build It Live events.

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The owners of this stunning contemporary home purchased the plot, which had existing planning permission for a new build on a designated brownfield site. However, with breathtaking views over the Chiltern Hills, they enlisted Levitate Architects (www.levitate.uk.com) to create a more ambitious design, navigating the local council's pre-planning process before consent

architect, but they do need practical experience and the ability to balance your brief with the planning constraints, as well as integrating the different design elements and making sure they're compliant with regulations.

Developing your plans

Design is the cornerstone of creating a home that meets your needs and budget. It's not just about construction drawings, but also creating a cohesive plan that satisfies the planning and building control departments and ensures everything can be constructed, from the foundations to the final touches. Even if you have consent, it doesn't mean you'll have a design that's ready to build. You'll need detailed plans to address planning conditions and estimate construction costs. You'll also need to ensure the house is buildable and compliant with regulations. The key stages of design are:

1. **Planning design:** After getting planning approval, review the drawings carefully and make sure they truly meet your needs. If not, address changes now rather than during construction. Work with your designer to resolve planning conditions, ensuring the proposal is both cost-effective and buildable.
2. **Technical design:** These aspects become the focus once planning is finalised. This stage involves creating construction drawings that comply with Building Regs and coordinate all design disciplines. You'll need a host of professionals, from architects and technicians to structural engineers and energy assessors, all of whom will need coordinating. So, make sure that your lead designer is prepared to be the Principal Designer.

Getting ready to build

With the paperwork and planning done, you can prepare to break ground. The best way to ensure your build starts on time is to follow a plan. While a construction programme is vital, the pre-start action plan is critical, too. Think of it as a to do list, outlining the key tasks and when they need to be done – this ensures long lead items arrive on time. With everything organised, you can set a realistic start date and avoid delays.

CDM requirements

The Construction Design and Management (CDM) Regulations apply to all construction projects, including self builds. These rules ensure health and safety are

CASE STUDY PAD Studio
LOCATION Hampshire
HOUSE SIZE 117m^2
PROJECT ROUTE Architect designed, homeowner hired main contractor for construction

Keen to downsize to a smaller house, the owners of this contemporary courtyard-style dwelling in the New Forest decided the best way to achieve the home they wanted was to create it themselves. They worked with the team at PAD Studio (www.padstudio.co.uk) to craft the plans for their new house, which replaces a small Victorian cottage on a plot that they'd previously lived next door to.

The project was subject to a local planning policy, which would have limited the floor area of the house to 100m^2, to preserve the size of small homes in the New Forest. PAD worked with the planning department, engaging in collaborative discussions throughout the process, which involved going through the pre-planning stage. Ultimately, they were permitted to incorporate a conservatory space into the floor area by adhering to conservatory planning rules – 75% of the roof is glazed and more than 50% of the walls are made of glass. Taking this route created an additional 17m^2 of precious floor space, which now accommodates a spacious and inviting, sun-soaked dining area.

With PAD's help, the owners went through the formal tender process with four companies to find a suitable builder. The firm they ended up choosing had worked on a job with the practice previously. From this introduction, the homeowners developed a positive working relationship with their builder that contributed to this stunning, single-storey home.

SIMON VINE PHOTOGRAPHY

Given the remote nature of this site in Northumberland, which is only accessible via a single-track road, the owners had to plan ahead when selecting the best construction system for their build. They went with SIPs from SIPS@Clays (www.clays.com), as traditional methods would not have been possible. The prefabricated panels could be offloaded from the articulated lorry and onto a pickup truck to be transported to site

Above & right: Welsh Oak Frame (www.welshoakframe.com) developed the design for this handsome home in Kent. The owners appointed their own builder, who was helpful in making suggestions as the project progressed. Though they handled the project management themselves, the owners' skills blended well with the expertise of the contractor they'd selected

properly managed to protect everyone involved. Compliance is mandatory for all self build projects.

If you hire a professional to manage your build, you'll fall under the category of 'domestic client' and your only legal duty is to appoint a principal designer and contractor. For self builders managing their own project, however, CDM responsibilities increase. You'll act as the project manager, so will need to ensure the site is safe place to work.

Appoint a builder

If you don't fancy self managing then you'll have the option of working with a project manager or appointing a turnkey contractor. Finding a great builder can be a bit tricky, but if your project looks attractive and well thought-out, you'll get plenty of interest. However, add a tight budget or construction complexities, and your options can narrow quickly. It's natural to feel nervous when your life savings are at stake, but don't worry – most builders are good, and with the right approach you'll find the perfect match.

Good builders are busy and selective. To attract one, ensure your project is well-prepared with a detailed design. As well as dimensioned plans and elevations, provide construction details, and address tricky areas that have the potential to drive up costs. A clear scope of work outlining your expectations is also essential.

Builders will assess you, the potential client, as much as they'll evaluate the project, so demonstrate you're organised, decisive and clear about what you want. Ask for references and speak directly to past clients. When choosing a builder or PM use your gut. If they seem unbothered by problems, move on. If you feel reassured, you've probably found a good one.

PLOT FINDING TACTICS

Target off-market opportunities: Approach landowners, get the inside track by networking in the local area and track down potential sites.

Specialist websites: Sign up to platforms like PlotBrowser.com to find listings in your area.

Explore in person: Walk around areas to spot overlooked opportunities such as infill and garden plots.

Consider custom build sites: Developers often offer serviced plots for self builders which are easier to build on and therefore less risky.

Use mapping tools: Specialist land finding websites and the planning portal are great places to find plots that wouldn't be otherwise obvious.

Auctions and replacement dwellings: These can be hidden gems if you do your homework, crunch the numbers and potentially seek some expert advice.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SELF MANAGING BUILDERS

1. **Notify the HSE:** If your project lasts more than 30 days (or exceeds 500 person-days), you must inform the HSE using their online form.
2. **Create a construction phase plan:** This document outlines how health and safety will be managed during the build. The free CDM Wizard app can help you draft it effectively.
3. **Ensure site safety:** Regularly inspect the area, secure boundaries and address hazards to prevent accidents or unauthorized access.
4. **Provide welfare facilities:** Ensure easy access to toilets, running water, rest areas and other essentials such as first aid. Welfare units can be hired in order to meet these needs.
5. **Arrange insurance:** Secure policies for Contractors All Risk, Employers' Liability and Public Liability. Make sure to ask your contractors for proof of their cover as well.

MARK STEVENSON

Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

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Garages & outbuildings

Above: Oakwrights designed this impressive three-bay oak framed garage with living space and a balcony above. The owners adapted one of the company's existing designs, The Porchester, before the team submitted a planning application on their behalf and delivered the hand-finished frame for on site construction

Right: Okopod designed and installed this innovative timber garden office in London, complete with expansive glazed bifolds and a sleek, contemporary facade. The company's modular garden rooms are made using sustainably sourced timber, plus they're quick and easy to install

Whether you're looking to upgrade your work from home setup or create a spacious, two-storey garage, Erika Chaffey explores some popular solutions that will add value to your property

Outbuildings are about more than just adding extra space; they can transform your lifestyle by providing flexible, functional areas for work, relaxation and even additional accommodation. Plus, it's a great opportunity to create something unique, elevating your site and your home's design. Here, I'm guiding you through a range of outbuilding projects.

Practical considerations

With careful and strategic planning, you can create a high-quality, futureproof space expertly tailored to your lifestyle. "Outbuildings are important to consider at the outset of a project to get the location right," says Jonathan Rixon, director at Rixon Architects. "Consider exactly what you want to use it for, both initially and potentially down the line."

Think about the best materials and construction option for your project goals and budget; does an off-the-shelf solution suit your requirements? Or would a bespoke design offer the best value for money? Entirely prefabricated structures provide a quick and affordable option, while a design and build package solution may be more appropriate for larger or more complex projects.

"Look at quotes carefully and focus on the quality of materials like oak or larch, which age beautifully and last a long time," says George Allen, regional design consultant at Oakwrights. Timber is a popular and sustainable choice for outbuildings – it's durable, versatile and insulating, plus a range of finishes can be added relatively easily.

Consider the functional details such as service connections, access to essential utilities and thermal performance needs. "In most cases you'll be required to make a building control application for your outbuilding, especially if it's going to be larger than 30m^2 or include sleeping accommodation," says Ben Hancock-Parr, architectural services manager at Carpenter Oak.

Obtaining the right planning permission for your project is also key. "Detached garages, sheds and outbuildings are usually permitted development (PD), meaning that you do not need to apply for planning permission," says Martin Gaine, Build It's planning expert. The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) sets out various additional guidelines you must also take into account including the location, size and overall look of your garage or outbuilding. However, not all properties have these rights and in conservation areas, you'll likely have to meet some additional requirements. "If you're in any doubt, it's always safest to draw up some plans and apply to the council for a lawful development certificate," says Martin.

SIMON KENNEDY

Far left: McCloy + Muchemwa Architects renovated a dilapidated garage in Norwich to create this funky hobby space with a small greenhouse towards the front entrance. Improvements were made to the building fabric, re-using and upgrading the existing structure where possible to minimise waste

Above left: The Roberts built this stunning single-storey outbuilding next to their daughter's home for their retirement, with the help of Welsh Oak Frame. The glazed gable floods the whole space with natural light and creates an eye-catching focal feature

Below: The Hormann Series 2000 steel up-and-over garage door, in style 2601 Elegance Anthracite Grey

Carports & garages

These spaces have evolved beyond their traditional roles and so it's important to design your garage with flexibility in mind. "Over time, these areas tend to accumulate clutter, so it's crucial to create storage zones that are easy to manage and adaptable," says Steve McCloy, director and architect at McCloy + Muchemwa Architects.

Two-storey solutions can accommodate extra living space above the garage zone, usually within a pitched-roof, creating a versatile outbuilding. "We've designed carports that include a workshop and a room above for office use," says George. "Adding rooflights or a balcony can help to maximise natural light and create an inviting space." This kind of design requires some additional planning; "consider the potential for first floor accommodation at design stage, as it will likely affect how you construct the building and comply with Building Regulations," says Jonathan.

Garden offices

This type of outbuilding is a popular solution for those looking to maintain a separation between home and work life. In a garden office, functionality and comfort are key. "Ensure your space includes all the essentials you need to work effectively, so you won't have to keep going back to the house," says Steve. "Opt for cooler, brighter lighting and an upbeat colour palette to keep the space polished yet comfortable." Remember to consider insulation, too, to ensure the space is comfortable to use all year round.

Incorporating glazed doors or large windows to increase your access to natural light and create a connection to the outside is a great way to create a bright and airy zone that aids productivity. "Consider extending the roofline to create an outdoor veranda, making the office space enjoyable in all weather," says George. As with any design that includes big areas of glazing, careful planning is vital to maintain a comfortable internal environment. "When it comes to layout, consider the sun direction and glare on computer screens," says Jonathan. "This might affect the location and size of windows and doors."

Extra accommodation

Adding an annexe or additional habitable space can dramatically enhance your home's functionality. "Unlike an extension, a separate annexe or outbuilding provides extra room with a degree of detachment or privacy from the main home," says Ben. Creating a distinct identity for your additional accommodation, while maintaining a practical connection with the main house is key to success. Using the same materials as the original structure in different shades, for example, or creating a strong visual connection via glazing can help to get the balance right.

In any habitable zone, thermal performance and solid construction are vital. "Using structural insulated panels (SIPs) or airtight membranes can create a thermally efficient space," says Gareth Edmunds, director at Welsh Oak Frame. "Plus, you need to ensure proper insulation and safety measures, like using fire retardant materials or double layers of fire-lined plasterboard."

Depending on your experience, engaging a professional may be the best way to ensure your build meets all the necessary requirements and your project goals. "Expert drawings and precise planning are crucial, especially for habitable spaces," says Gareth. "Consider every aspect, from layout to thermal efficiency in your design."

CONTACTS **Carpenter Oak** 01803 732900 www.carpenteroak.com **Just Planning** 07534 337377 www.just-planning.co.uk **McCloy + Muchemwa Architects** 07926 359590 www.mccloymuchemwa.com **Oakwrights** 01432 353353 www.oakwrights.co.uk **Okopod** 020 3011 2860 www.okopod.com **Rixon Architects** 01285 323454 www.rixonarchitects.com **Welsh Oak Frame** 01686 688000 www.welshoakframe.com

Summer houses & pool rooms

If you have the space and the budget, a summer house or pool room can add a touch of luxury and value to your existing home. They should complement your garden space, blending functionality with aesthetic appeal. "Pool rooms in particular often require larger spans, offering an opportunity to create spectacular designs," says George.

For a multi-purpose space, it's important to prioritise practical, low-maintenance materials. "These spaces should have non-slip, easy-to-clean surfaces and be detailed with colours and materials that let the garden or pool remain the visual focus," says Steve.

QUICK LOOK GARAGE DOORS

Sectional Comprising panels connected by hinges, these doors open vertically, sliding along tracks. They're space-efficient and offer good insulation – but require ceiling space and can be costly to install.

Roller These consist of narrow slats that roll up into a compact coil. They're ideal for small garages and are easy to operate. Bear in mind that they may offer less insulation and can be noisy.

Side-hinged Swinging open like traditional doors, they're easy to use and offer easy access. However, they need ample driveway space to open.

Up-and-over These pivot outwards and upwards. They're durable and affordable but require significant front clearance in the driveway.

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FRAMING VIEWS

Above: Designed by Stylus Architects, this home's garden is beautifully highlighted by contemporary, chunky, black-framed glazed doors, while an up-and-over glass roof allows the view to carry on uninterrupted overhead, offering a fuller perspective of an oak tree in the outside space

Whether it's a picturesque landscape or a charming garden, find out how to make the most of your site's unique features with **Erika Chaffey's** guide

Creating a connection between your home and its surroundings can significantly elevate your overall design and the enjoyment of your space. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is through thoughtful view framing. From oceans and mountains to modest courtyards and busy streetscapes, the way you highlight these features can enhance your interiors, blur the boundary between inside and out, and make your home feel more spacious and inviting. Here, I'm looking into how to make the most of the unique outlooks your site has to offer, plus some of the main solutions to consider for an effective design.

Why is view framing important?

Curating views isn't just about aesthetics; it's a fundamental aspect of your home's design that influences how your space feels and functions. "At the heart of our approach to every project is the consideration of the available sightlines and vistas," says Matt Withers, director at Stylus Architects. "These elements are essential for creating a natural flow through the property." By strategically framing a scene, you can draw focus to specific features, create a seamless connection with the outdoors and even influence the mood and atmosphere within your property.

"Beyond simply creating something nice to look at from the inside; it's about making the landscape a living part of the home," says Ella Thorns, architect at Studio Bark. "Views bring natural light and a sense of spaciousness, but they also tie the house to its site." This integration enhances visual appeal and celebrates your surroundings, creating a home that slots in beautifully with the location.

Key considerations

Start by analysing the unique features of your site. Identify the scenery that you want to highlight, and what you may prefer to be obscured. "Understanding the landscape, the direction of views and the sun's path, is crucial," says Ella. Positioning windows and openings to maximise light and the best sightlines, while avoiding overheating and excessive glare is key. For instance, when designing glazing for south-facing walls, you might opt for solar glass or fixed external shading to balance these aspects.

Finding the sweet spot between opening your space up to its surroundings and maintaining security is also vital. The placement and size of openings should enhance views without compromising your privacy. "Being creative with window positioning can help," says Victoria Brocklesby, COO at Origin. "For example, clerestory-style windows are a great way to draw the focal point above eye level. Plus, they can save wall space and allow more light to fill a room, without allowing for direct sightlines inside."

The methods

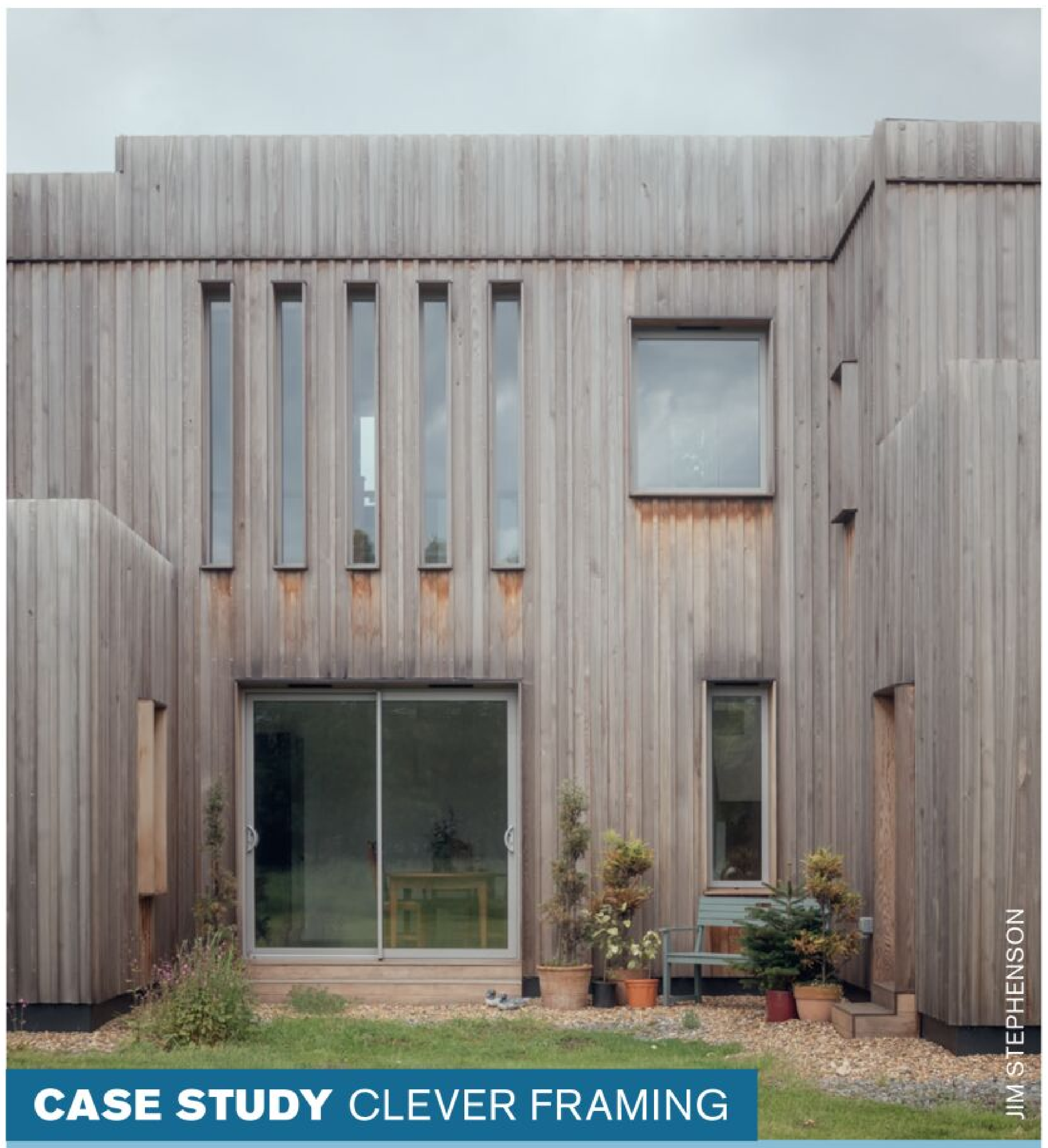
Building form & shape

The configuration and orientation of your building play a crucial role in framing views. "The form of the main structure isn't just an aesthetic choice; it's a response to the location," says Ella. Whether it's an elevated roofline or an upside-down layout with living spaces on the upper floor, these design choices can help to capitalise on the best views your site has to offer.

"Play around with the geometry of ceilings and walls, combining solid sections with glass to shape the experience of the space, for instance," says Matt. This creative approach can help direct attention to specific features while drawing natural light into your space.

Above: Origin's OS-29 glazed sliders and OW-80 windows help capitalise on this site's ocean views. Slimline frames maximise sightlines and considered placement allows for panoramic views of the surroundings, while maintaining areas of solid wall to create a cosy and comfortable living zone

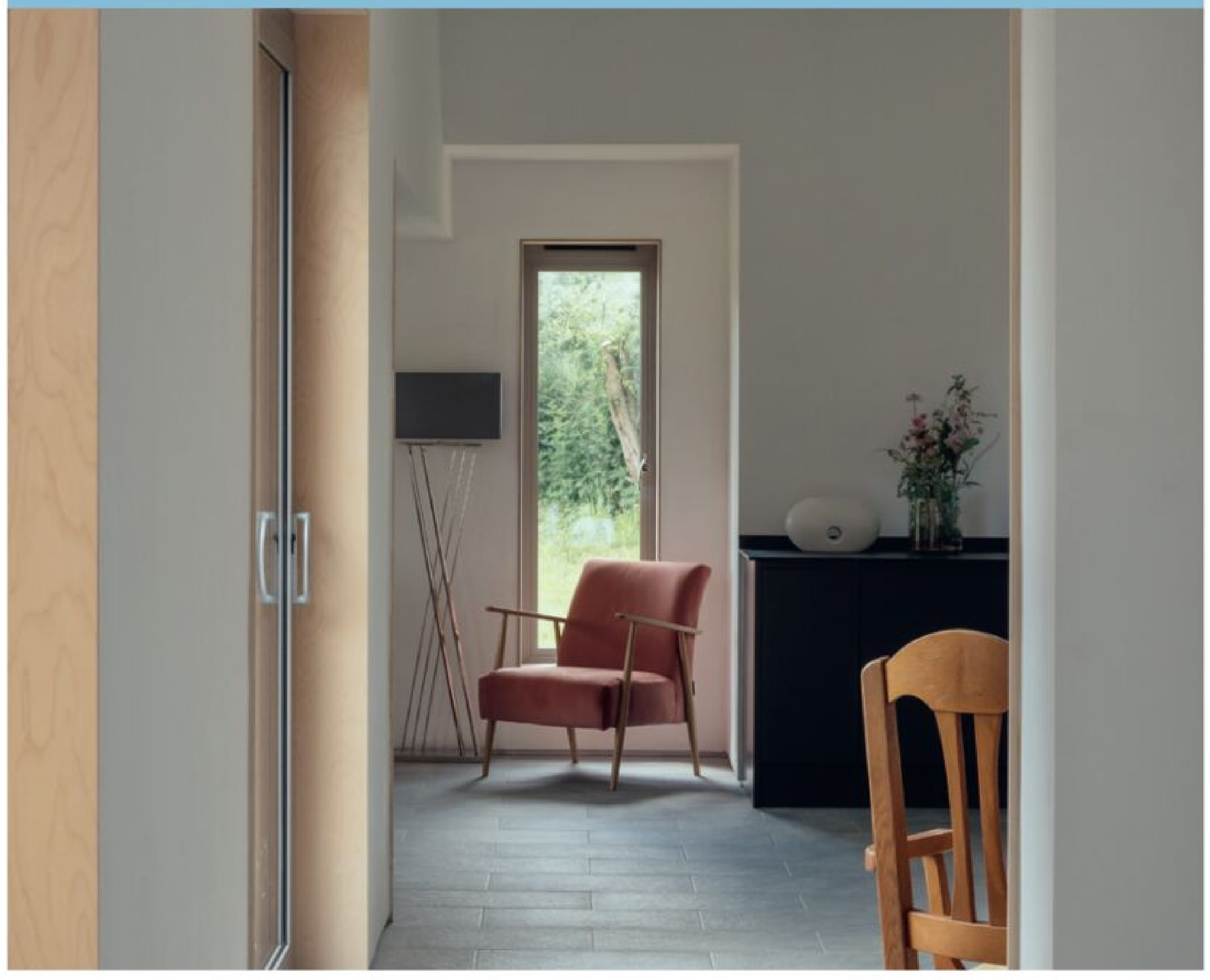
Below: Urban Front designed this front door setup. A window to the side of the main entrance opens the space up to views of the front garden and creates a welcoming, light-filled area



JIM STEPHENSON

CASE STUDY CLEVER FRAMING

This impressive home by Studio Bark is positioned in the north-west corner of the plot and features a three-sided south-facing courtyard that captures expansive views across the picturesque site. Sliding doors open up to the outdoor space, providing a direct connection to the landscape and directing occupants to the best views. Elsewhere, thoughtfully positioned glazing in varied shapes and sizes helps to manage solar gains, while providing eye-catching snapshots of the rural plot. This allows ample light flow internally and creates visual interest.



Glazing

Perhaps the most obvious solution, glazing can be the perfect way to highlight your chosen views and create an eye-catching focal point. Keep in mind that design and placement requires careful consideration. "Slimline bifold doors and large panels of fixed glass can often replace an entire wall," says Victoria. This can work well for larger spaces but may not be the best fit for every home.

Sometimes, less is more. "A smaller unit can be more impactful than large swathes of glazing," says Victoria. This can help maintain privacy and manage solar gains while providing an intriguing snapshot of the outdoors.

The colour of your frames can also influence the perception of views. "Light, soft shades will make the door or window appear larger, which is ideal for smaller rooms," says Victoria. "While darker colours create a strong visual contrast against the incoming light, drawing the eye toward the view outside."

Walls & boundaries

Used for more than just dividing up space, internal walls can also be instrumental in revealing interesting features. "Utilise natural materials, like timber, stone or plants, to match the surroundings while framing views," says Ella. Strategic placement of walls can direct attention to your desired views while offering seclusion from less appealing areas you may want out of sight, or unwanted onlookers.

Equally, a lack of walls and boundaries can open your space up to a view, so think carefully about the best way to highlight a particular vista. Fences and hedges can also play a role – consider how your landscaping can add visual interest without obstructing the views you most want to showcase.

Corridors & entrances

Think creatively about how to seamlessly integrate the outdoors into different areas of your home, including your entryway. "A great way to highlight your surroundings right from your home's entrance is to specify a front door with glass to the sides and above," says Elizabeth Assaf, co-founder and designer at Urban Front. By making your entrance more prominent and incorporating architectural glazing, you can create a dramatic and inviting effect that frames the landscape beautifully.

"Many homes we work on have a long hallway that highlights a view at the end and to the sides, beckoning you inside," says Elizabeth. The length and location of corridors plus the size and layout of your entrance can significantly enhance how views are experienced within your home. "Considered design of corridors can enhance both practicality in the home and help to maximise your site's features – drawing you towards a viewpoint," says Matt.

CONTACTS

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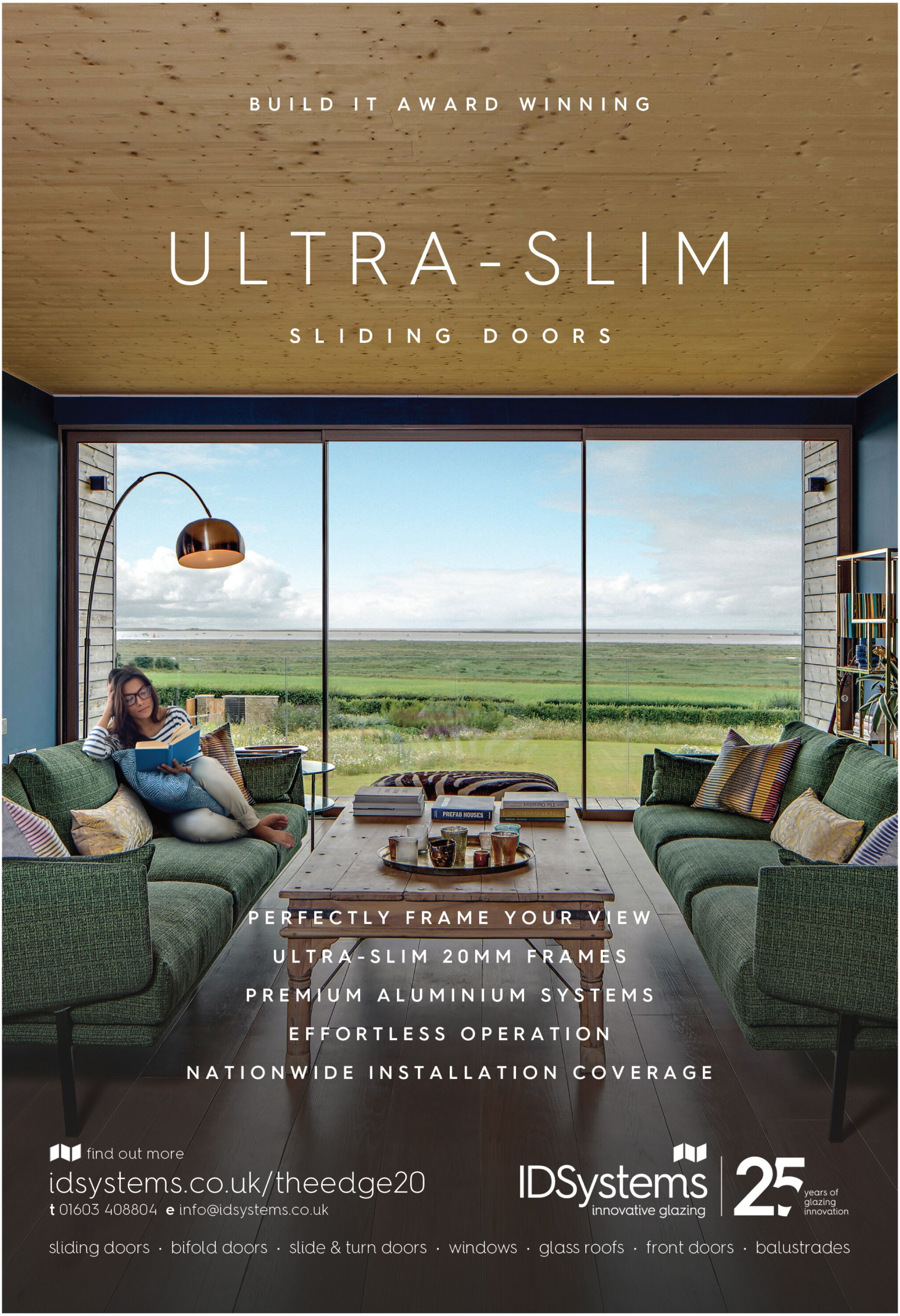
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Above: Available from Ecological Building Systems (www.ecologicalbuildingsystems.com), Gutex Multitherm is a breathable insulating sarking board made of recycled wood chips. It can be used for a variety of applications, including as external insulation for timber frame walls and pitched roofs. The close-fitting tongue-and-groove profile helps eliminate thermal bridges and ensures a windtight barrier

Pros & cons of wood fibre insulation

With impressive green credentials and a range of applications, wood fibre could be a fantastic choice for your project, says **Nigel Griffiths**

Manmade insulations are the norm in UK construction, for obvious reasons: they're designed to deliver great performance at optimum prices. But many of these are oil-based, plastic products such as PIR, which have a relatively high embodied energy (meaning they're pretty carbon-hungry to manufacture).

If you want to put more focus onto the environmental impact of your project, there are some great natural and recycled options to consider. Perhaps the best known of these is wood fibre insulation. But what are its benefits, and could it be the right choice for your project?

What is wood fibre insulation?

This type of insulation is made from the residues of timber processing, such as sawdust and wood shavings. It comes in two basic forms – boards and batts – but is also available in a blown-in format.

Wood fibre boards are rigid and available anything from 25mm to 200mm thick. They can be square-edged or interlocking (to improve airtightness). Batts are spongy semi-rigid blocks of insulation, which can be compressed slightly to fit snugly in between timber studs, for instance, so they are commonly used in timber frame construction.

Frequently, the two products are used together, ie batts between studs and boards over them, which addresses any thermal bridging through timber wall and roof panels.

Benefits of wood fibre insulation

There are several ways in which wood fibre insulation scores well when compared to conventional insulation products. Most of these relate to its sustainability credentials, but there are other practical benefits, too:

- A waste product, derived from a renewable resource.
- It has very low embodied energy and locks up CO2 for the lifetime of the building.
- This insulation allows the building fabric to breathe.
- Offers excellent moisture-bearing capacity.
- Wood fibre products have some heat-bearing capacity.
- Its density means it has good acoustic properties.

How it's made

We need to learn to treat waste as an asset rather than a problem. Wood fibre is a byproduct of the timber processing industry, so it's a great example of making intelligent use of something that might otherwise be classed as waste.

Timber is grown, and trees should be planted everywhere, so it is by definition a renewable resource. This compares well to products such as rigid foam insulation, which are derived from oil – a non-renewable, depleting resource.

Low embodied energy

Wood fibre insulation is used in a form that's pretty close to its natural state, requiring minimal processing. This is important because, as we get better at reducing energy use in buildings (for heating, lighting etc), the embodied energy of the materials that we use to construct them becomes a much more important component of the overall environmental impact of construction.

Carbon sequestration

Organic materials such as timber and other plant-based materials effectively lock up carbon during the life of the product. As the tree or plant grows, CO2 is transformed into carbohydrates by photosynthesis. It is then stored in all derived materials when used in construction.

You may have heard aspiring eco-builders use the term carbon-negative when describing their dream home plans. This means the CO2 emitted manufacturing the building materials that go into constructing the house is more than offset by the carbon stored in the materials themselves.

Vapour permeability

One big technical benefit of wood fibre insulation is that it's vapour permeable. This means that it allows moisture (in vapour form) to pass through, enabling the building fabric to breathe. This reduces the risk of moisture build-up, condensation and mould growth – issues that have plagued older buildings in the UK's damp climate (particularly when homeowners look to upgrade their performance with inappropriate non-breathable insulations).

To maintain a vapour-open construction, the other wall or roof materials must also be permeable. This applies to boards, membranes, plasters and paint.

Moisture-bearing capacity

At first, it might seem contradictory that a breathable material that allow vapour to pass through can also absorb and store a limited amount of moisture. This buffering effect helps to even out natural fluctuations in internal moisture levels as we occupy our buildings.

Wood fibre insulation is very good at storing moisture (up to a point). By contrast, although mineral wool is vapour permeable, it has no moisture-bearing capacity and becomes ineffective as an insulant if it gets too wet.

Heat-bearing capacity

Most insulation materials have very little ability to store heat. Sometimes, modern eco buildings can overheat because they lack thermal mass – somewhere for heat to be stored – and are instead too lightweight.

Thermal mass helps to even out fluctuations in internal temperature caused by solar gains and by occupation, so should always be part of the thermal strategy for new buildings. Wood fibre insulation does have thermal mass, and while it's true that it's not as good at storing heat as dense masonry, it does at least offer some heat-bearing capacity to help with internal temperature management.

Finishes

One of the big advantages of wood fibre boards is that they can be used as a substrate for plaster – so internal finishes can be applied directly to the insulation with no need for any other layers. Lime or clay plasters are the best options for use with wood fibre boards as they are vapour-open, like the boards themselves.

Use in new build homes

As a self builder, you have the power to choose your construction systems. If you're aiming to build sustainably you may well choose timber frame, which is ideally suited to sustainable and natural insulations. Timber frame wall panels insulated with wood fibre should be very similar in thickness to a conventional cavity wall construction for the same performance level, albeit slightly deeper than timber panels using foam-based insulations.

Use in retrofit

Well-publicised failures in eco retrofit projects are frequently linked to the use of impermeable, plastic insulation products that trap moisture, leading to mould growth and resulting health issues. Wood fibre insulation does the opposite and actively promotes occupant health via good moisture management and breathability. It can even help to absorb toxins to improve air quality.

Internal wall insulation (IWI) in older buildings (ie properties of traditional construction) is a technically tricky subject and fraught with risks due to condensation and thermal bridging problems. Wood fibre insulation, applied correctly and at limited thickness, can help to resolve many of these issues and is one of the very few materials that can be used safely in this application. It ought to become the go-to material for IWI in future.

Costs of wood fibre insulation

When comparing insulation costs, you have to allow for the thickness of insulation needed to achieve the same U-value. The thickness required would be little different from mineral wool, butyou'll need a greater thickness than with plastic-based insulations to achieve the same U-value.

Wood fibre insulation is currently more expensive than mineral wool. However, as a proportion of the overall build cost, or even the cost of retrofitting when you take the labour element into account, the difference is not that significant. For the modest extra uplift, you get all the benefits of using a renewable healthy product with low embodied energy. If your aim is to reduce CO2 emissions, then it makes sense to start with a product which is low in embodied emissions and actually locks up carbon.

Is it going to become mainstream?

Definitely. This is exactly the sort of material we should be using as it's renewable, low impact, healthy and can be locally sourced – with economic, social and environmental benefits. [Ed's note: it seems the big players in construction agree: in early 2024, Kingspan paid €250m for a majority stake in leading wood fibre insulation manufacture, Steico.] We need to get away from our dependence on oil-based materials and start to use products that actually benefit us all, and do not deplete limited resources.

Opposite page, inset: Oakwrights' (www.oakwrights.co.uk) WrightWall Natural system – which provides the insulating, airtight encapsulating wrap for its oak frames – is now available with Steico Zell air-blown wood fibre insulation, delivering excellent thermal performance, enhanced noise reduction, a healthy living environment and sustainable, low embodied carbon construction

OTHER TYPES OF WOOD WASTE-BASED INSULATION

It is possible to simply use the source material – waste products such as wood shavings and sawdust – as insulation. This is cheaper and less processed than wood fibre boards and batts. However, the R-value of these raw products is much lower, so they're not as effective as insulants.

Some Nordic countries have carried out trials using wood shavings as insulation, including coating the shavings with clay to improve fire resistance, thermal performance and moisture capacity.

In Germany, some established building companies are beginning to use less-processed, wood-based insulation – typically within timber frame panels – with their own approaches to achieving the requisite standards.

As with all natural options, wood shaving insulation must be combined with vapour-open membranes, boards and finishes to achieve a breathable structure and deliver optimal air quality. Always ask to see certifications that the product is suitable for the application, and meets UK fire safety criteria.

Below: Baufritz's (www.baufritz.co.uk) high-performance walling panels are factory-fitted with its own Hoiz spruce wood shaving insulation. The company treats the shavings with whey for fire resitance, soda to protect against fungal attack, and compresses the product to achieve good thermal resistance

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BUILDING SAFETY ACT:
Why you need to protect your project

Many self builders and renovators are unaware of the Building Safety Act (BSA)'s liability implications. Protek's Simon Middleton explains what you need to know

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Above: The Building Safety Act covers the design, construction and ongoing maintenance of new dwellings

Introduced in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster, the Building Safety Act (BSA) 2022 aims to improve the safety of all new buildings (not just high-rise properties). One of its most significant changes is tucked away in Section 135, which inserts new wording into the Limitations Act (LA) 1980, extending the limitation period for claims under Section 1 of yet another piece of legislation, the Defective Premises Act (DPA) 1972. This could have a significant impact on anyone building, extending or renovating their home.

What do the BSA changes mean for me?

Prior to the BSA, claims related to defective premises could generally only be brought within six years of completing the construction work – which just happens to line up with the effective period of a professional consultant's certificate (PCC). The updated Limitation Act extends this time limit as follows:

Developments completed after 28 June 2022: The new limitation period for bringing a claim is 15 years from completion of the development.

Developments completed before 28 June 2022: the period is extended to 30 years from the completion date.

The BSA also introduces a new prospective right of action against any person who "takes on work in relation to any part" of a dwelling. This means claims may now also be brought in respect of any refurbishment or remedial works completed on an existing building after 28 June 2022, subject to the 15-year limitation period.

Under the DPA, anyone involved in the construction of a residential property has "a duty of care to any person who acquires an interest in a dwelling" to carry out their work in a workmanlike or professional manner, such that the property is "fit for habitation" upon completion.

This is good news if you plan to live in your home until the end of time; less so if you plan to sell before then. That's because the DPA goes on to say that a person who "arranges for another to take on work for or in connection with the provision of a dwelling shall be... included among the persons who have taken on the work."

What's the best way to protect against future claims?

A key step is to keep full records: contracts, product logs, photos of works in progress, dates professionals were on the site and everything in between. This is the minimum you would probably need to defend or launch a legal case, whether you put additional protection in place or not.

A professional consultant's certificate (PCC) is sometimes viewed as an effective route to protecting yourself against a future claim. However, a PCC relies on that professional's indemnity insurance, which only covers negligence. So, if a future owner pursues you for a defective property, you'll need to prove professional negligence (assuming it's within the first six years of certification). This could be a futile, costly and time prohibitive process. Don't forget, the claimant has as much as 15 or 30 years to pursue you.

In addition, with a PCC, you may be excluded from making a claim at all in the first 12 months – not helpful, given most defects arise in the first two years. PCCs are cheap for a reason, and their function as a risk management tool is very limited. We're starting to find that some lenders are now reconsidering whether to accept them.

A self build structural warranty gives far better cover over a much longer duration of time. Crucially, that cover starts from day one. These products are suitable for extensions, renovations, remodels etc, too. You should always obtain your warranty from a recognised provider and ensure it doesn't have a two-year defects period. A good policy is transferrable to the future buyer of a property and, unlike a PCC, there is no requirement to prove negligence in the event of a claim. So, it's a more comprehensive and robust solution.

Ideally, look for a warranty that includes cover for failure to comply with Building Regulations. The Limitations Act provides a right to claim for damage suffered as a result of a breach of Building Regs. This part of the LA has never been enacted but, given the BSA amends the same section, it's likely this will come into force in the near future.

In essence, the BSA aims to provide greater protection for homeowners, providing new options to seek redress for defective building works. So, prepare and manage your exposure (or recourse opportunity) by taking action now. Structural warranties are available retrospectively, even after you have completed the project, to give you the cover you need.

SIMON MIDDLETON is managing director of Protek Group. Since starting his career as a site engineer, he has been underwriting site insurance and structural warranty in the self build and construction sector for over 25 years. **For more information speak to the team by calling 0333 456 8030 or go to www.protekselfbuild.co.uk**

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THE FIRE TEST HOUSE

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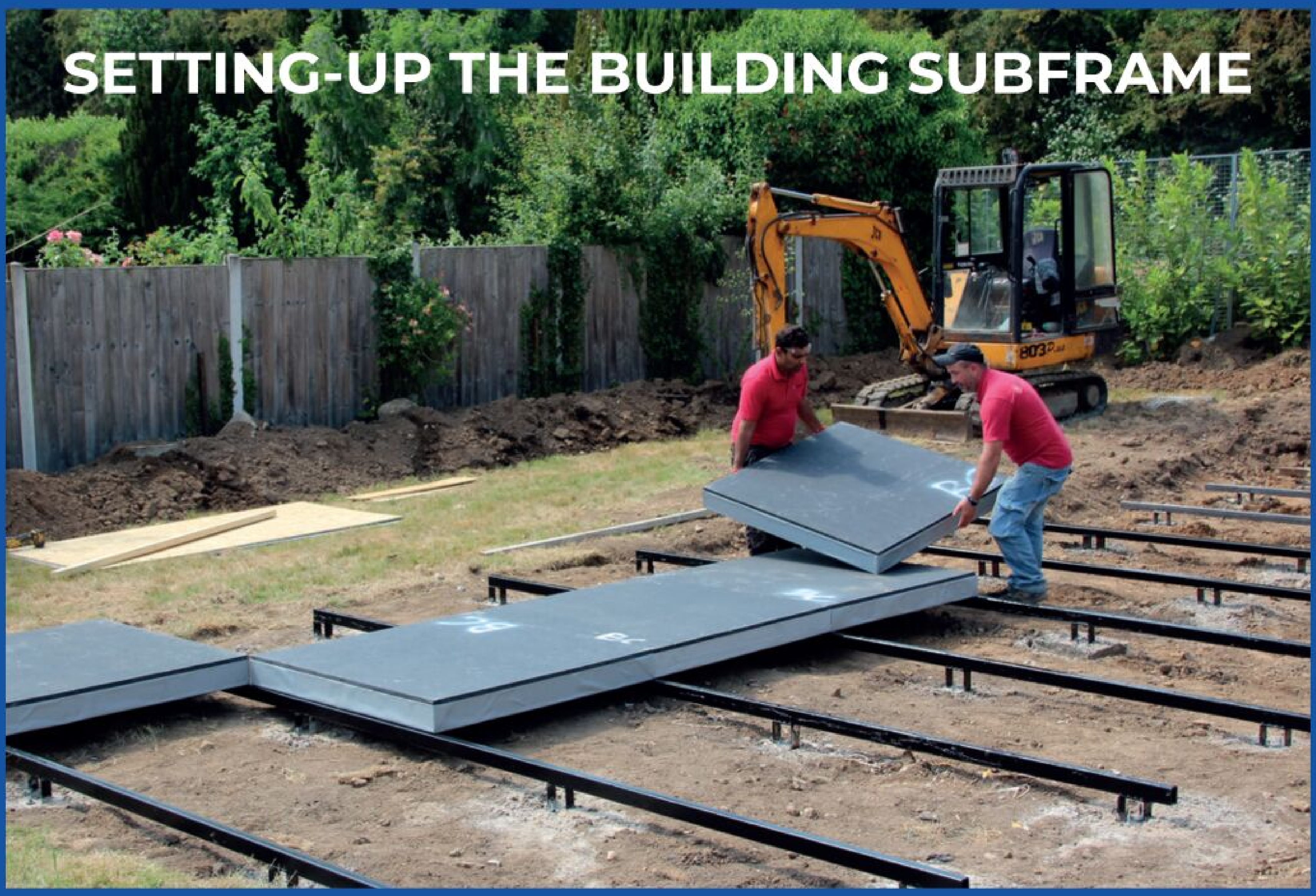
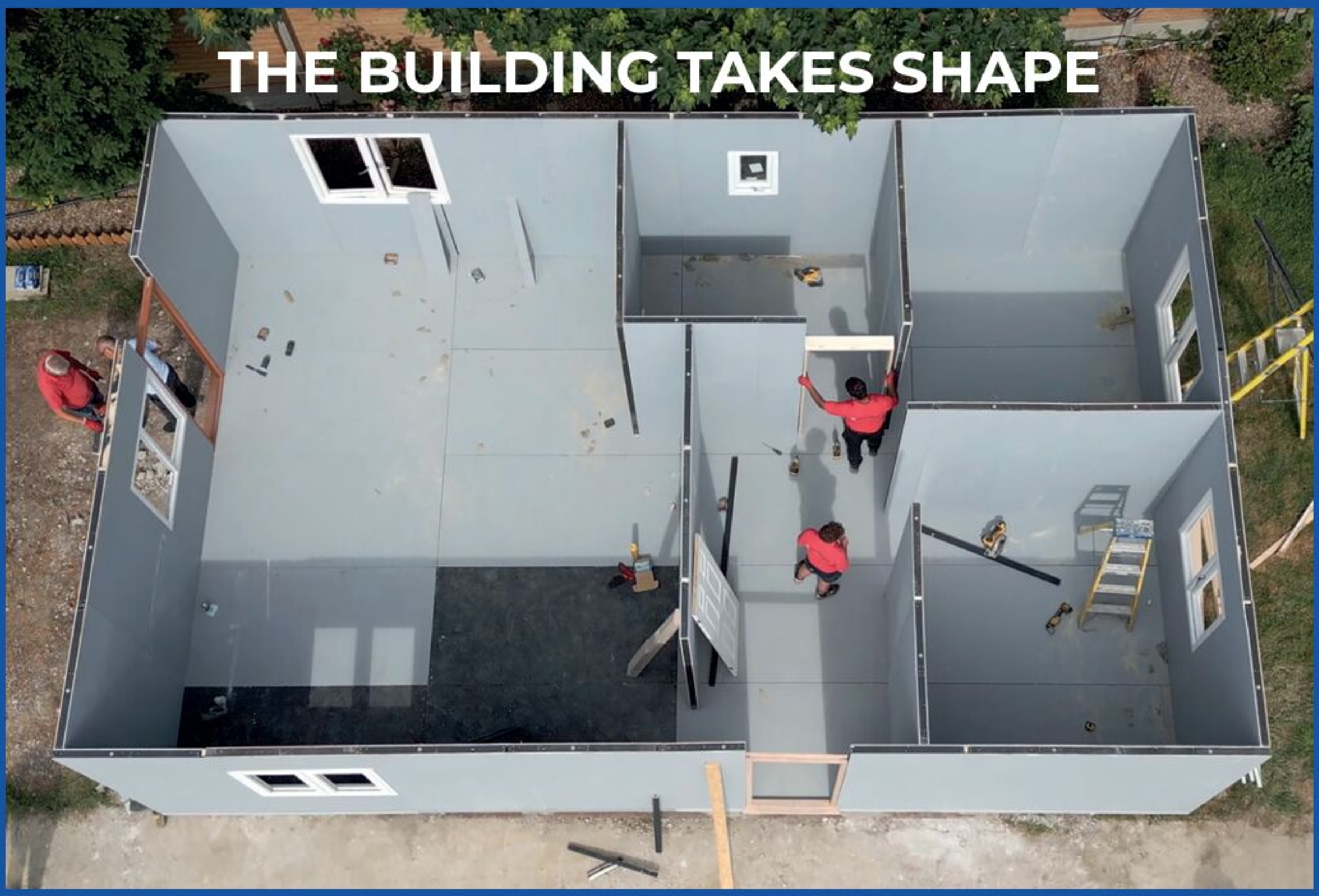


SETTING-UP THE BUILDING SUBFRAME



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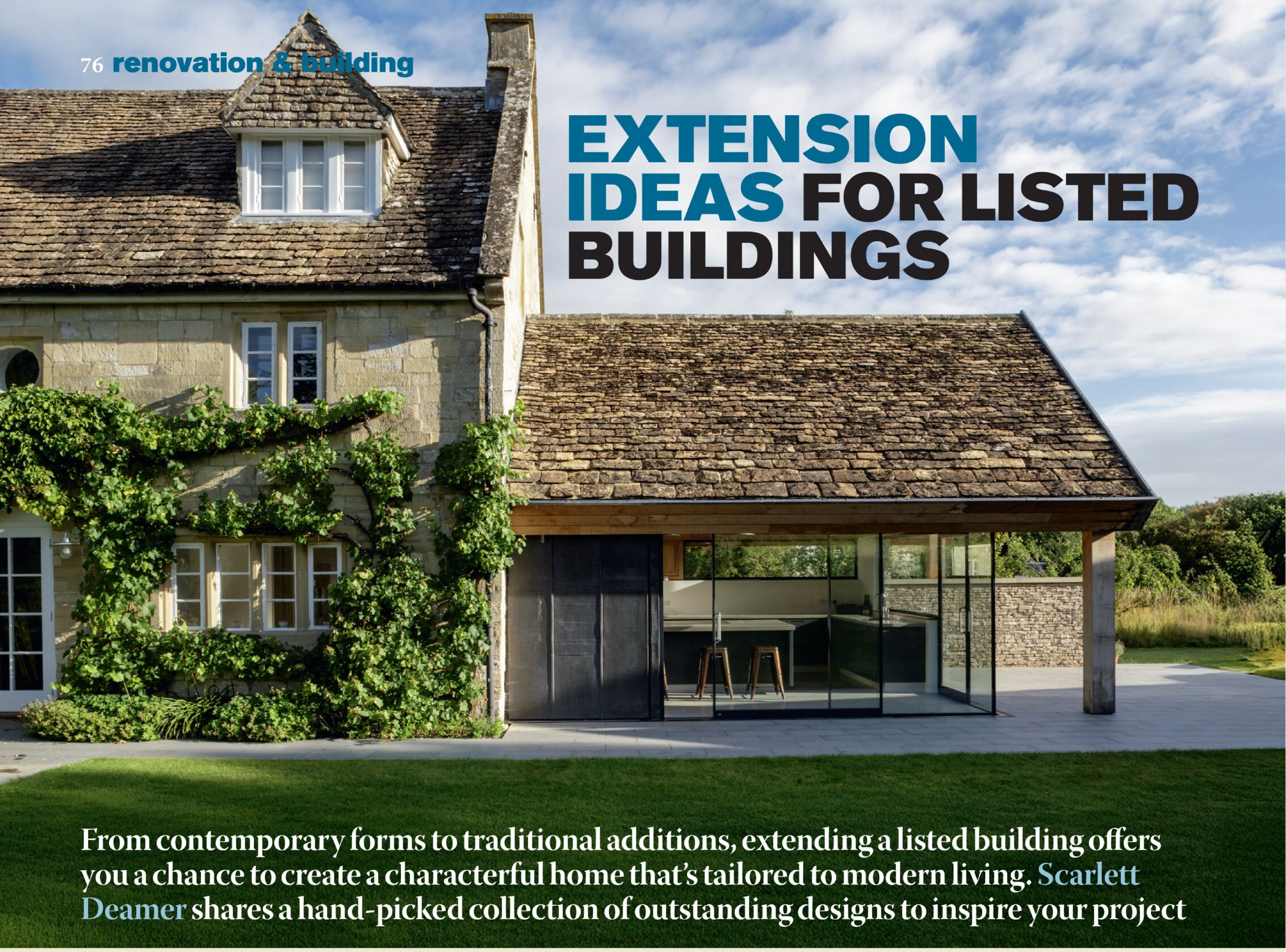


EXTENSION IDEAS FOR LISTED BUILDINGS

From contemporary forms to traditional additions, extending a listed building offers you a chance to create a characterful home that's tailored to modern living. **Scarlett Deamer** shares a hand-picked collection of outstanding designs to inspire your project

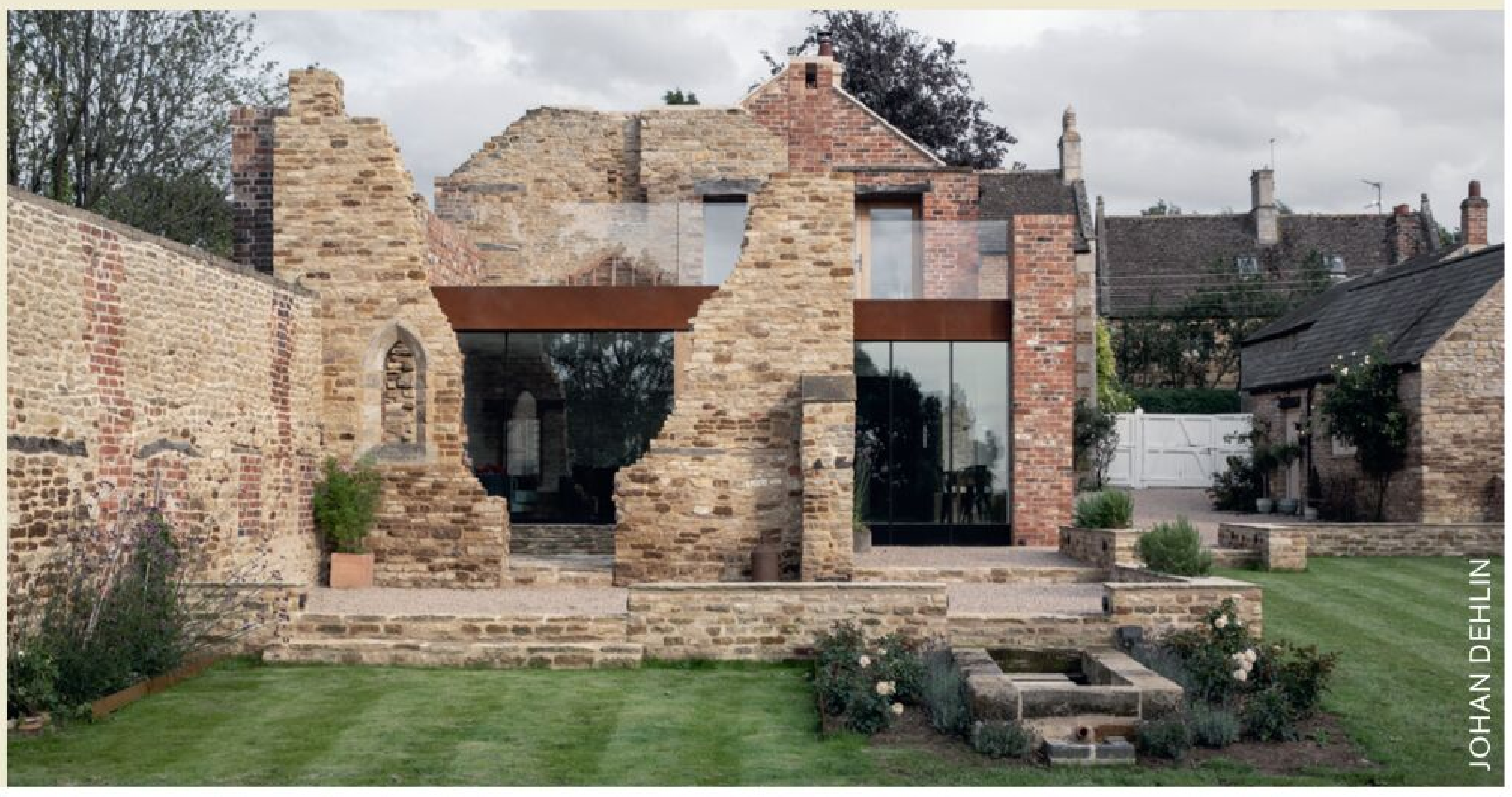
MARK BOLTON PHOTOGRAPHY

SEAMLESS ADDITION

This grade II listed farmhouse had been heavily altered and adapted in the 1970s, leaving the new residents with a poor-quality conservatory and little connectivity to the surrounding garden. This new addition, by Charlie Luxton Design, is a single-storey extension with pitched roof that effortlessly merges with the main house. The roof tiles were reclaimed from a local property to match those on the existing building, cementing the addition as an evolution of the site's original style. High-performance glazing and repurposed traditional materials, such as open-jointed stone walling, oak and lead, were incorporated into the design, but used in a contemporary style to add a touch of modern flair to the project. **(www.charlieluxtondesign.com)**

EMBRACING HISTORY

The ruins of a 17th-century parchment factory in Northamptonshire were initially to be demolished, and a disused cattle shed converted to create an extension that would better suit the owner's lifestyle. However, William Gamble Architects came up with the innovative solution of delicately placing a new extension within the confines of the original masonry wall, both preserving and celebrating the site's history. Corten steel, oak and reclaimed brick, plus predominantly upcycled materials found on site, were used to finish the exteriors, ensuring the extension sensitively blends into the landscape. Internally, the structural beams of the old cattle shed have been purposefully left exposed, beautifully celebrating the house's traditional architecture. **(www.willgamblearchitects.com)**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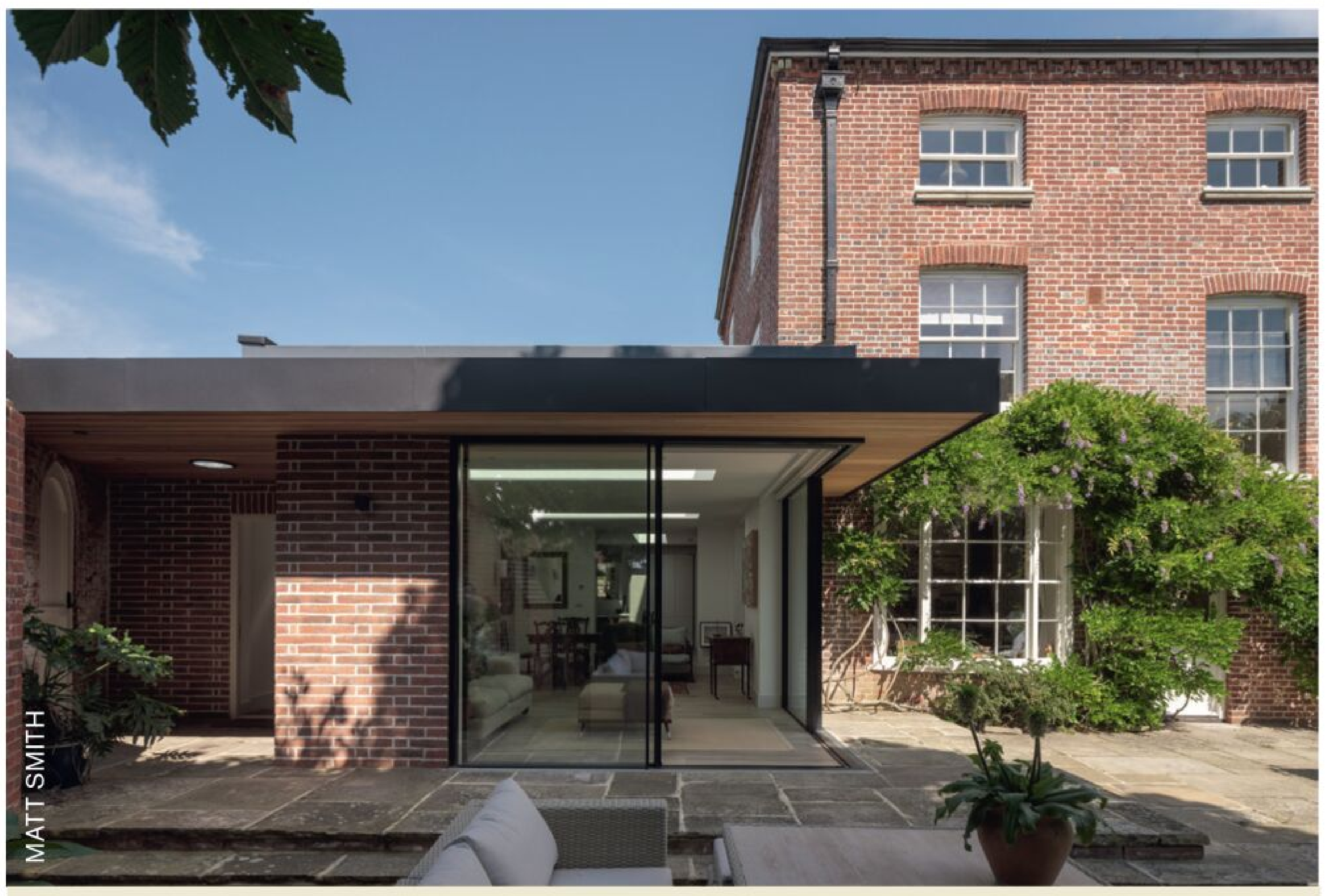

MATT SMITH

BRIGHTENED SPACE

Originally built for a Royal Navy Admiral, the owners of this 19th-century home wanted to create a space that would better connect the listed property to the carefully landscaped gardens surrounding it. The new scheme is nestled within a void on the site that was previously occupied by a dilapidated conservatory, to take advantage of a historic brick wall. The structure comprises a sensitive palette of materials, including red brick, dark aluminium and cedar cladding. A glazed corner creates a graceful transition between interior and exterior. Due to the plot's tight constraints and planning restrictions, carefully spaced skylights and lightwells present a clever solution for drawing natural light deep into the floorplan. **(www.hdarchitects.co.uk)**

EXPERT VIEW PLANNING YOUR LISTED BUILDING EXTENSION

NICOLE GULER, director and chartered town planner at Urbanist Architecture (www.urbanistarchitecture.co.uk), shares her advice on what to consider when seeking planning approval to modify and upgrade your listed home

Is it more complicated to obtain planning approval for changes to a listed building?
Yes, getting planning approval for a listed building is typically more challenging than for a standard property. Listed buildings are protected due to their historical or architectural significance, so any changes, including extensions or alterations, must preserve their character. This means that, in addition to planning permission, you'll need listed building consent, which involves stricter scrutiny by local authorities and possibly heritage organisations. The process can be more time-consuming, with a higher likelihood of additional requirements or restrictions.

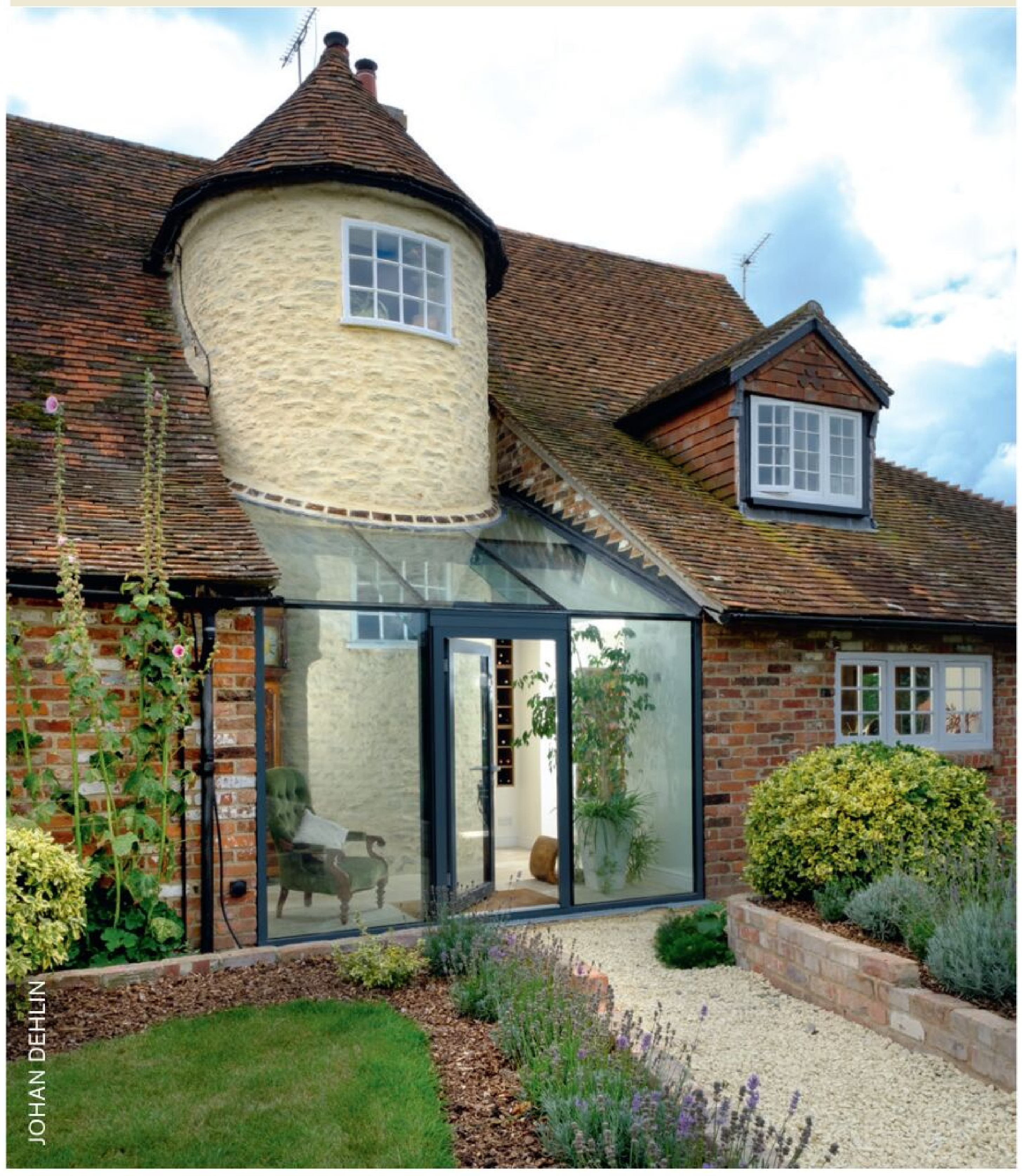
What alterations are allowed on a listed building?
Repairs and maintenance using like-for-like materials are generally acceptable, as are internal changes that don't affect the building's historic character, though these often need approval. Sympathetic extensions may be permitted if they preserve the building's integrity and original layout, but modern features like double glazing or external alterations to the existing structure, such as replacing original windows or doors, are usually restricted. Demolition of any part of the main building or irreversible changes to key features, such as decorative elements or historic layouts, is generally not allowed.

What needs to be included when applying for listed building consent?
This type of application requires additional documentation compared to standard planning approvals. This includes a detailed heritage statement that explains the building's historical significance, assesses the impact of proposed works, and demonstrates how they preserve its character. You'll also need precise plans, elevations and drawings showing existing conditions and proposed changes, alongside material specifications and methods to ensure authenticity. Photographs, structural reports and consultation feedback from heritage bodies or conservation officers may also be required to support the application.

Is it typically more expensive to extend a listed building compared to other homes?
Extending a listed building is generally more costly due to the need to ensure you are preserving its historical character. This usually requires specialist materials and construction techniques that match the original structure, which often come at a much higher price. Obtaining planning for listed buildings can also be more complex and time-consuming; it often is essential to have detailed designs and in-depth consultations with conservation officers or heritage bodies. Additionally, the involvement of qualified and skilled craftspeople who are experienced in historical restoration will further increase costs when it is compared to works on non-listed properties.

CELEBRATING CHARACTER

Structural glazed links offer a clever solution for extending a listed building. To the rear of Chestnut Cottage, a grade II house within Oxfordshire, a sleek addition elongates the home's existing living spaces and creates a new passage to the garden. Created from frameless glass, the new extension seamlessly joins with the original limestone rubble wall of a spectacular turret, preserving its aesthetic. A beautiful red brick semi-circle design effortlessly conceals the glass connection to the wall and draws the eye to the magnificence of the feature. **(www.iqglassuk.com)**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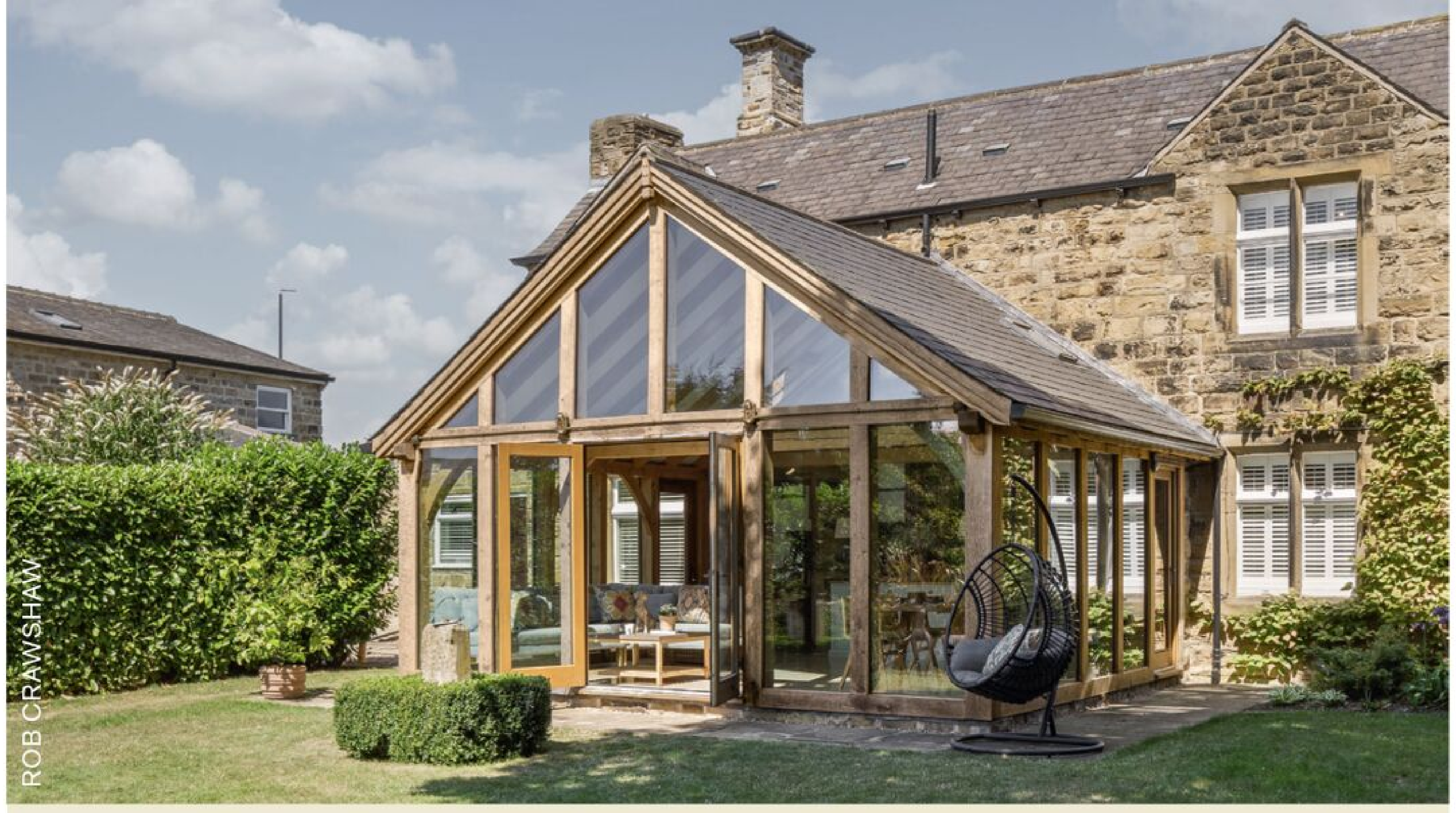
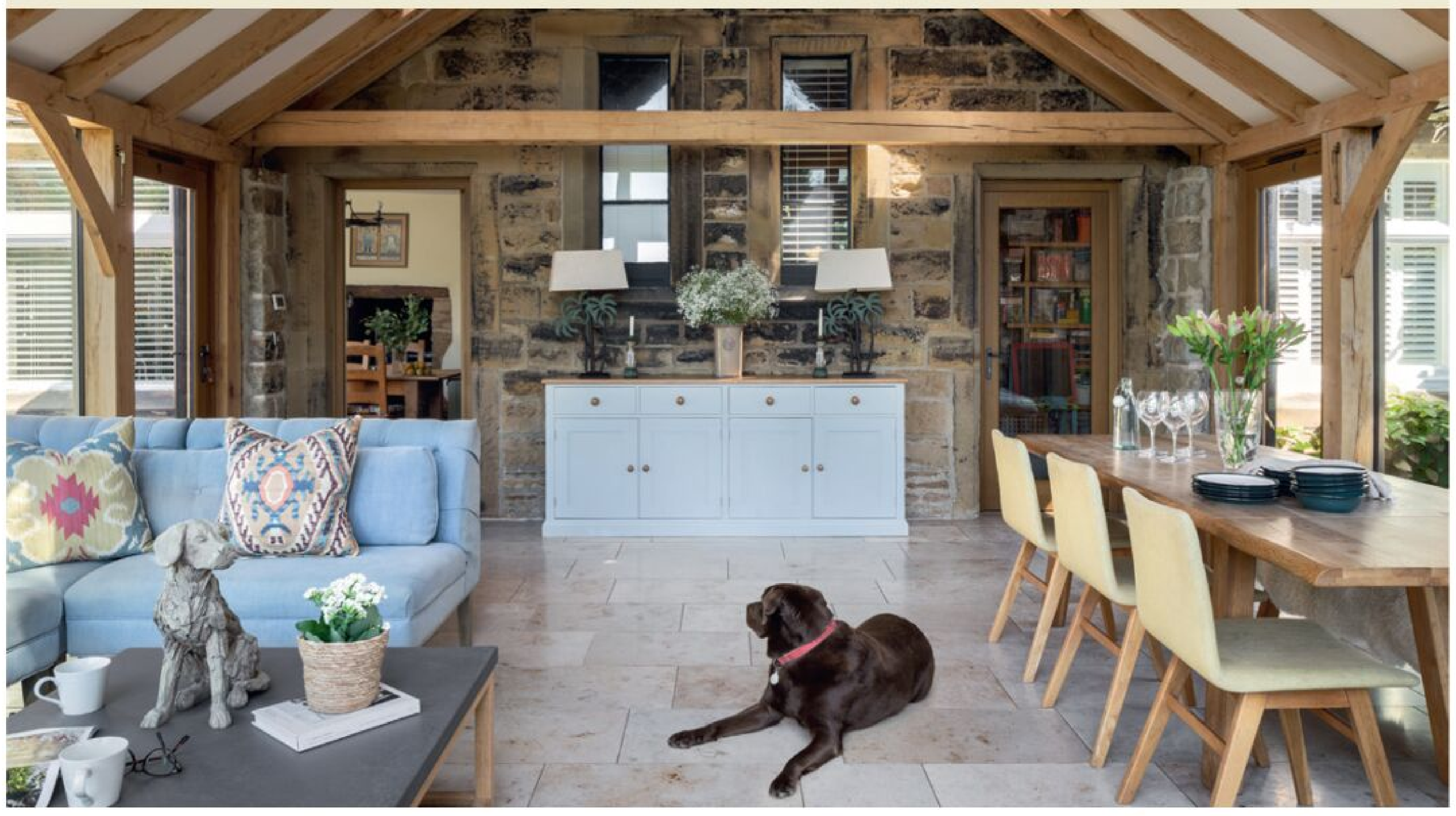
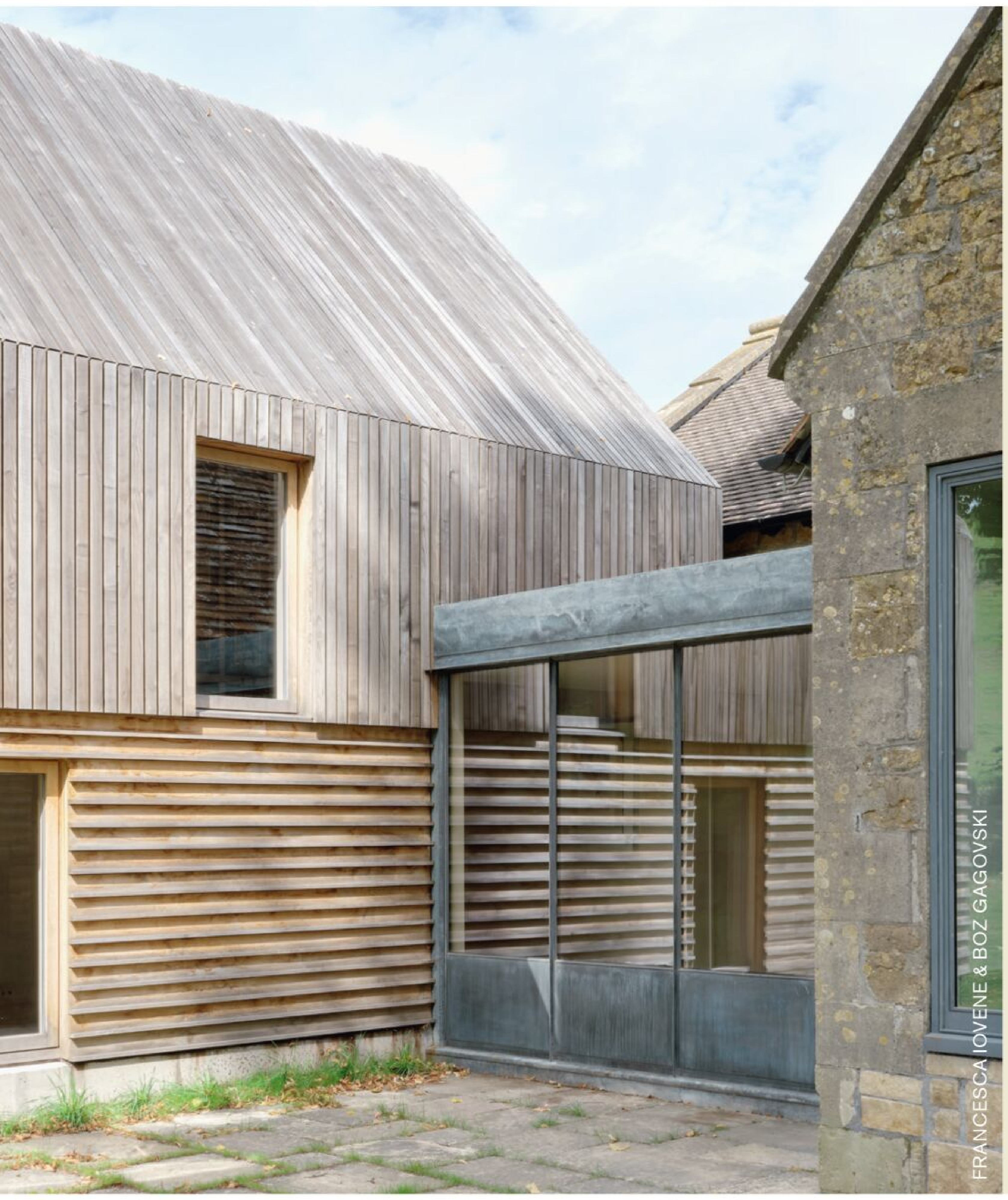

ROB CRAWSHAW

CHARMING OAK EXTENSION

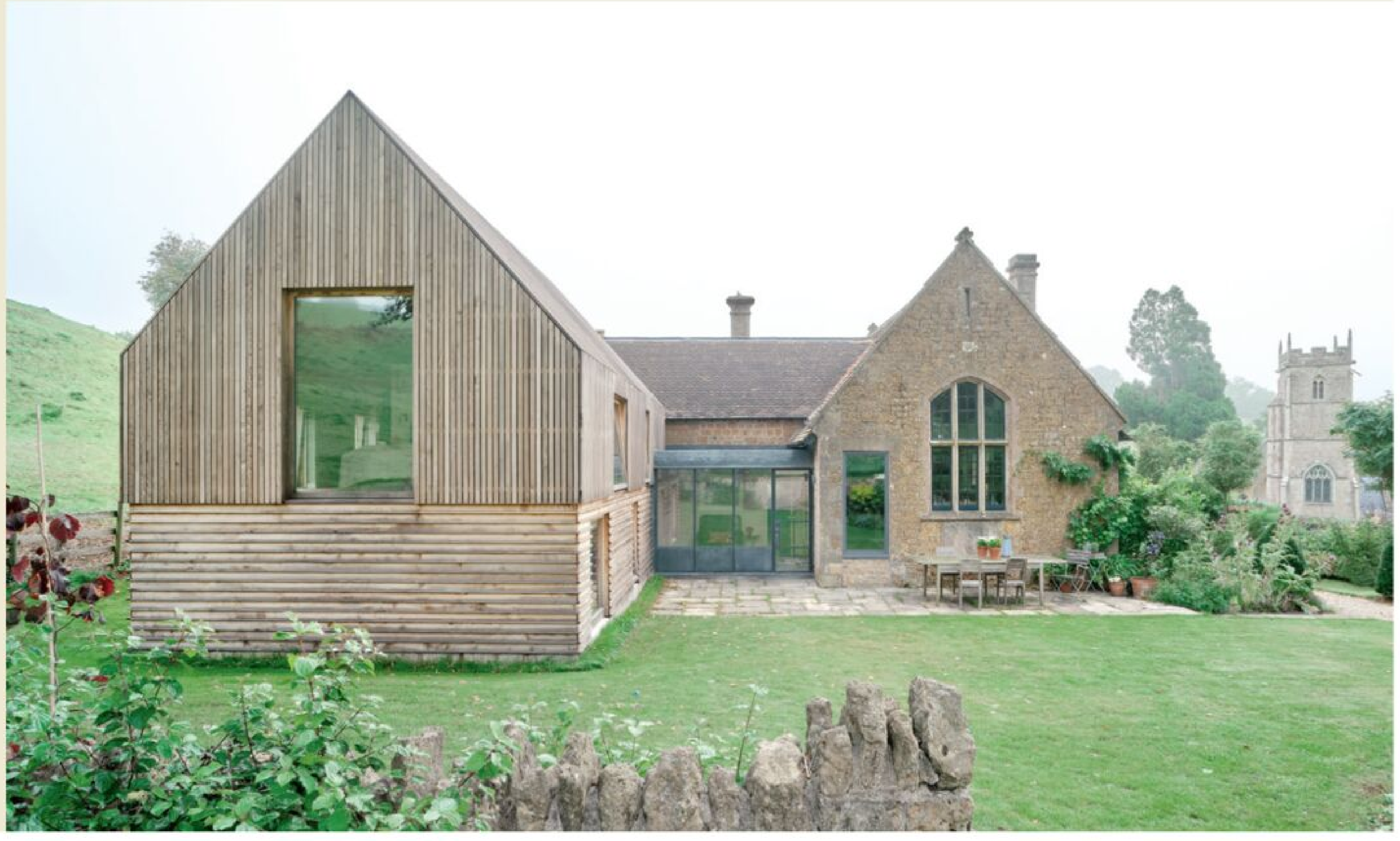
Oakwrights was appointed to design a new garden room to add a light and airy, adaptable space to this 17th-century home in West Yorkshire. The exposed oak frame construction instils rustic charm, while the three external walls use extensive frameless face glazing to incorporate the extension into the landscape. A new set of double doors allows occupants to easily move between the sunroom and the garden, while the choice of underfloor heating means the space feels cosy and warm over the winter months. The original exterior of the property has become an enchanting feature of the new interior, with its light sand, beige and brown tones shaping the neutral colour palette of the internal space. **(www.oakwrights.co.uk)**




FRANCESCA IOVENE & BOZ GAGOVSKI

LINKING OLD & NEW

A minimalistic structure, created from patinated galvanised steel doors, connects this 19th-century Somerset home to its new two-storey extension. The link building reveals some of the original stonework, which was previously covered by uninspiring extensions – a feature which subtly integrates the history of the building with its contemporary configuration. Bindloss Dawes' design seeks to create the feeling of a rural home that's been added to over time. Clad in locally-sourced English sweet chestnut, the extension includes carefully positioned openings that capture the impressive vistas from the surrounding valley and draw in sunlight throughout the day. **(www.bindlossdawes.com)**



EXPERT VIEW DESIGNING YOUR LISTED BUILDING EXTENSION

OPINDER LIDDAR, Architect and director of Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk), looks at some important considerations to keep in mind when creating your listed building extension

What architectural features need to be retained when conducting work on a listed building?
Everything that is within the curtilage of and including the building itself is protected under the listed status. Therefore, all elements should be preserved when you are considering works to the property, except those elements approved by your listed building consent.

Usually, very old or original features like fireplaces, windows and walls are likely to be retained in the design, as these will be considered important for understanding the original building and why it has become listed.

If you are hoping to remove internal walls to make your house more open plan, you may well find that this is going to be significantly restricted by the local planning authority.

You can carry out repairs or maintenance work before listed building consent is needed, but make sure to use like-for-like materials. If areas of repair are going to be extensive then I'd suggest that you liaise with your local authority's conservation officer to check if you need specific permission.

How restrictive are the material choices that can be used for an extension to a listed building?
If you are working on the original structure, then you will need to utilise the same traditional and breathable materials that were originally used, so that the works complement the existing property. Materials like lime renders, mortars or washes and breathable natural insulation will often be expected.

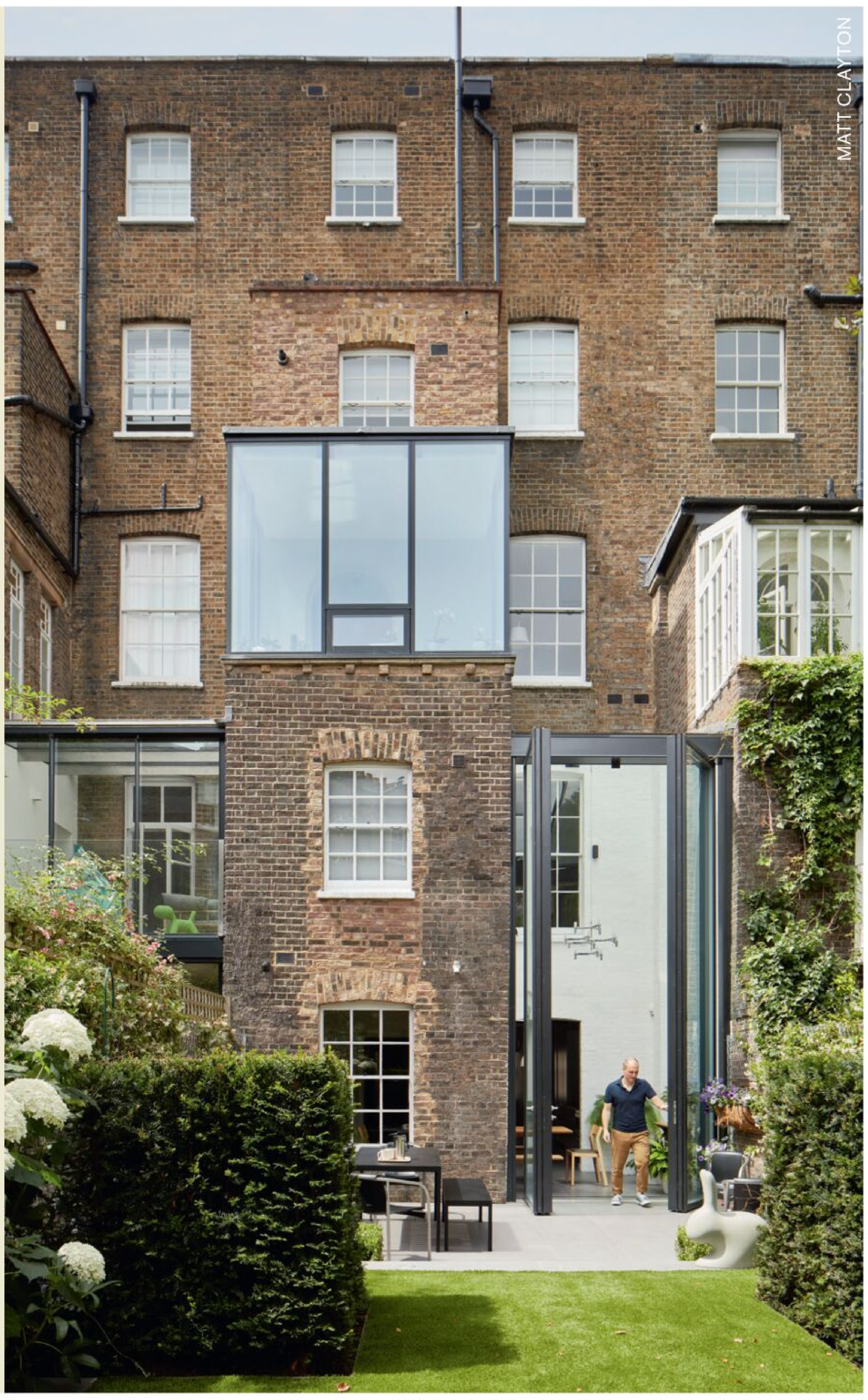
If you are replacing the roof then the likes of thatch, slate or clay tiles will be proposed on pitched roofs and lead for original flat roofs. Where you are building a new extension, this can be comprised of new materials and potentially use modern methods of construction, as long as there is some respect shown to the listed property.

Can environmentally friendly technology and sustainable materials be incorporated into the design?
This is a common consideration for clients, and I have found that some authorities are becoming more receptive to these measures. I believe that, as long as sustainable measures are thoughtfully planned and the placement of equipment does not compromise the setting, it is not only appropriate but perhaps essential to integrate these measures into listed building projects. However, not all conservation officers or local authorities have turned this corner yet, so I expect that you may still face some resistance.

Should the extension have a modern or traditional look?
I would personally always look to go with a more contemporary design complementing the original building. There is little to be gained in terms of respecting the existing structure or understanding how the building has evolved by adding a pastiche version onto it. To ensure the structure's survival for the next few hundred years, we should use materials and construction methods that reflect the best of contemporary architecture. If there is merit in the design, I believe that future generations will then judge if the new addition is as worthy of listing, as the existing property.

WOW FACTOR GLAZING

This voluminous, double-height space with colossal two-storey pivot doors replaces an old, ill-suited conservatory at the rear of this grade II listed house in Camden, London. The new glazing creates a striking modern addition, opening up the previously compact home with a new open-plan kitchen-dining area, while also allowing the historic rendered facade to remain visible. A similar conservatory at the first floor has also been removed to make way for a striking, cubic glass box that cleverly maintains the listed window arch and internal pocketing shutters. **(www.robertrhodes.co.uk)**



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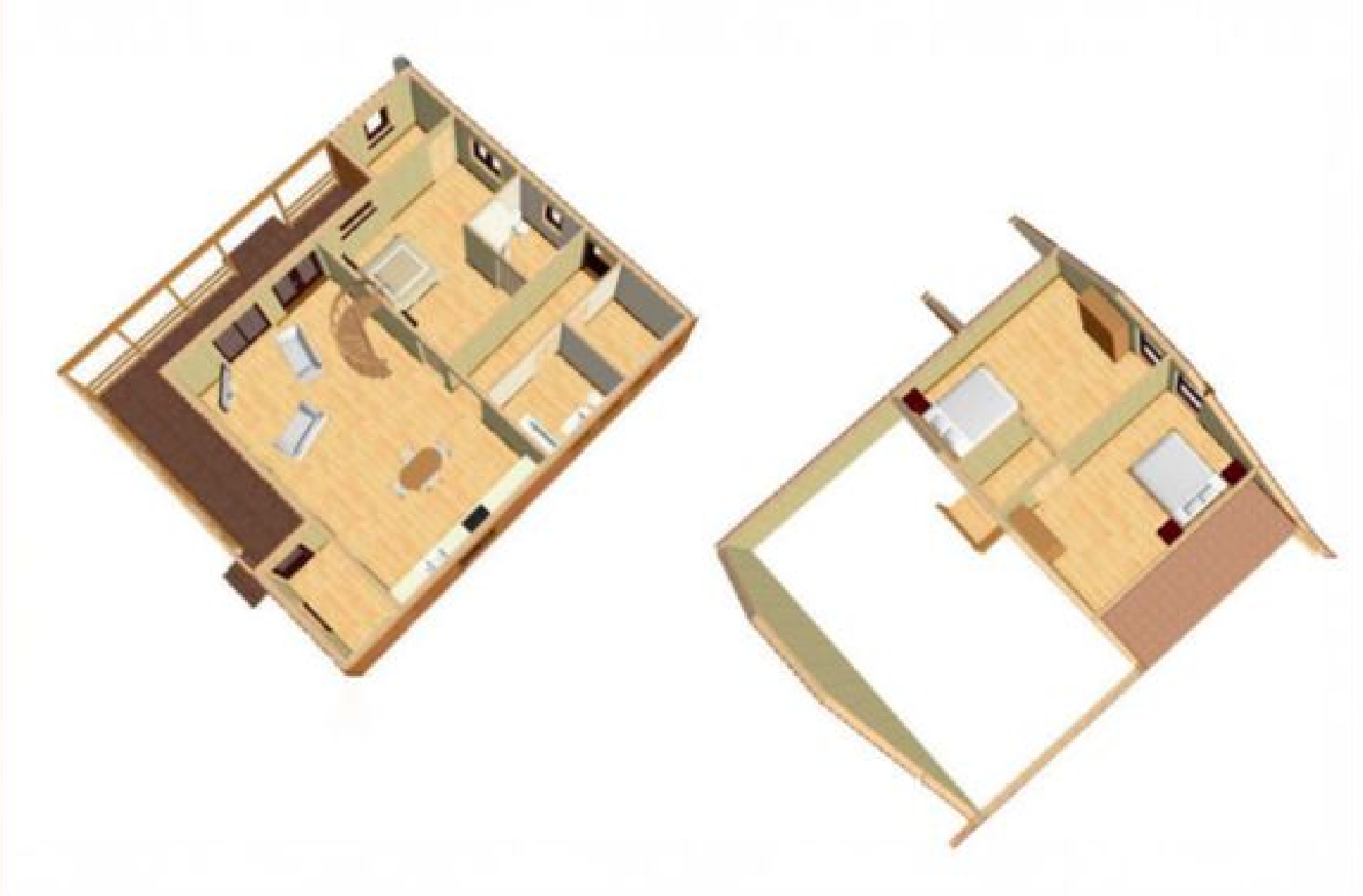

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Planning expert Julia Riddle looks in-depth at what you can achieve without planning permission and what factors you need to be considering

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DEVELOPING A BUILDABLE HOUSE DESIGN

Successfully taking your self build from concept to completion requires you to consider the different design features that can both help and hinder the building process. Architect Julian Owen takes a closer look at the key areas to note

Above: This five-bedroom, energy-efficient brick home, designed by Weave Architects (weave-architects.com), features a simplistic, cubic design with a light masonry finish

The standard houses you see on large estates have often been built hundreds of times before. Whatever you think about their design, their construction has been refined and modified many times until they are as quick, easy and cheap as possible to build. Most self builds and nearly all house extensions, however, are one-off, bespoke projects that have never been constructed exactly like that before, and probably never will be again.

If you want to help your project to come together smoothly on site, without the headaches and tantrums that feature so prominently on TV shows, pretty much every key decision made as the scheme develops should be subjected to a buildability test. This doesn't mean that your design has to be boring, or that you can't incorporate any interesting or unique features. But before work gets started on site, you should have a clear idea of how it will be put together and have eliminated any difficulties with the construction, for the sake of your peace of mind as much as your budget.

What does a buildable design look like?

A high-quality, achievable plan can be realised without spending a lot of money or introducing a load of complicated features. In the right hands, a simple approach can produce an elegant solution. For example, plenty of Georgian buildings don't indulge in fancy stonework, but still employ a sophisticated, proportional design with regards to windows and doors.

If you want a great design and an easy time during construction, there are a few basic principles to follow that will increase buildability. Using simple shapes and 90° angles in the plans and elevations is a good way to start. These ensure that the building is straightforward to set out on site and requires less skill and time to complete than more complex forms. For the same reason, stick to straight lines rather than circles and curves.

Reducing the number of different materials being used is beneficial, too, because this means that fewer trades are needed throughout the project. For example, a wall that's made up of render, brick and timber cladding would need three different skill sets to complete it, all in need of different tools, delivery timings and storage requirements.

Maximising standardisation is an important concept, that is well used by the companies that build those large estates. If the sizes and details of the materials and components used are restricted to a few types, the work required becomes more predictable and with every repetition of a task it gets quicker and easier to complete. If this approach is used along with setting the dimensions of the house to suit standard products, it makes building with them less complicated. If all the doors are the same size and design, and all the related details such as the architraves and ironmongery are also consistent, a lot of time that would be spent on site measuring, double-checking and preparing timber, is saved. The less cutting of materials required before they are used also saves time and reduces wastage. The reason that 2.4m is the standard height for a ceiling in the UK is mainly because that is the size that plasterboard is made (2.4m x 1.2m) and they can be lifted into place on the walls without being trimmed to fit.

Choosing the right construction option

The tolerances needed for a building material represent an important factor when considering how easy it is to use. If they have a high tolerance, this means that less precision is required when they're installed, and solutions to problems that might develop can be improvised on site. For example, a lot of minor inaccuracies can be concealed by a skilled brickie, because bricks are quite small units that can be easily pared down if needed. The thickness of mortar joints and courses can be varied very slightly to absorb the problem of a concrete foundation that is not quite as level as it should be, or if a length of wall has accidentally been built differently to the drawings.

Above: Nestled into a green belt woodland plot and consisting of two timber frame, barn-style volumes separated by a tranquil courtyard, this 2024 Build It Award-winning home was created by TAS Architects (tasarchitects.co.uk) and Timber Innovations (timberinnovations.co.uk)

CLOSER LOOK DON'T FORGET SERVICES

A key aspect of some projects that is sometimes not considered properly at an early enough stage is how the services will be arranged. Just ask any plumber and they will have tales of how a lack of planning has lead to headaches for them, trying to run pipes and ducts following contorted routes to avoid steel beams and prevent them cluttering up the clean lines intended for an interior design scheme.

Concealing ductwork is an increasing challenge as the Building Regulations demand a higher and higher standard of energy efficiency. The installation of services can be made considerably easier by designing in places for vertical ducts and services as well as grouping bathrooms together and putting them above the kitchen and utility room. However, this needs to be integral to the layout from day one, rather than waiting until after planning permission has been granted to tackle it, when changes to the floor plans are harder to make.

CHRIS SNOOK

Above: Build It readers Teresa and Anthony Ralph worked with On Architecture (onarchitecture.co.uk) to develop their self build design. Inspired by clean, modern structures and the iconic buildings by Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier, the new home emerged as a striking contemporary structure made up of a series of box-like pods

Cladding boards with tongue and groove joints allow for small inconsistencies in measurements and movement once in place. Components with low tolerances need a much higher standard of accuracy and rectifying even small mistakes may require the work to be demolished and rebuilt. Bifold doors look superb and are a popular design feature, but the openings that they fit into must be built very accurately and they may not fit if the variation in size is more than 10 or 15mm, or if anything is out of level.

Another important characteristic of a building material is how easy it is to deliver, store and position on a construction site. Ordinary bricks score quite well in this respect because they are robust, relatively light, and easy to stack up on site or on the scaffold. Their size has been chosen so it's exactly right for a human hand to lift and position easily. By contrast, if your design calls for a large sheet of glass to be positioned high up on the building, perhaps in the apex of a gable roof, considerable skill is required to install it correctly and safely. Not only is it heavy to manoeuvre into place, its fragility means it has to be managed with great care from the moment it arrives on site. It may look spectacular, but if you want to make the builder's life easier, break it down into smaller panes.

JULIAN OWEN

Julian Owen is an East Midlands-based chartered architect and author of several books on self build and house alterations. His publications include Self Build, Home Extension Design and Kit and Modern Timber Frame Homes. He's also the founder of the ASBA Architects network. To find out more visit www.asba-architects.org.

One way to simplify the build of a house is to have either some of the elements or the whole dwelling's structural shell manufactured offsite in a factory setting, where conditions are a lot more controlled and more predictable than you might find up on a scaffold in the pouring rain.

Timber frame kits can be assembled indoors by the supplier and then erected on site as a watertight shell in a couple of weeks or so. This means that from quite early in the construction programme, there are warm, secure spaces available for working and storing materials, which is one reason why this approach is taken by many people who are doing a lot of the actual building work themselves.

If you don't want a modular construction, parts of the building can still be prefabricated offsite. Trussed rafters are an alternative to building a roof on site from timber rafters and joists. They are made in the factory using the minimum amount of wood necessary, reducing waste, and delivered as triangular units. These can be quickly hoisted into position with far less site work than that needed from a carpenter building from scratch.

Ensuring a streamlined build

There are plenty of practical ideas that can make your house's construction far less complicated. A lot of success depends on planning in advance, starting with your choice of where to create your new home.

An ideal site has several distinct features. It should be flat, with adequate access for deliveries and plant to reach it without difficulty. There should be plenty of space for storage of materials and equipment as well as a site cabin and other facilities essential for the construction team. The house footprint should allow space between it and the boundaries for access and scaffolding. A flat plot of land, with no trees near to the foundations and good ground conditions will make construction as simple and cost effective as possible.

If you are intending to carry out some of the building work yourself, make sure that you accept your limitations and get professionals in to cover the gaps in your skills. It is essential that a well thought out, detailed programme of works is created in advance, with adequate time allowed for the more challenging features, so that they can be assembled with care.

Once construction is underway, be prepared to be flexible when you hit an unexpected problem and change the design if necessary to avoid an issue, such as unexpectedly poor ground conditions, or a sudden shortage of particular trades or materials. If you have confidence in your construction team, consider their advice on how to improve buildability and where possible, take it.

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Smart cost management for self builds & renovations

Self-Build Zone's Jake Fitness explores how you can keep your build budget in check, while still delivering a quality home

Taking on a self build or major renovation is an exciting, if daunting, prospect. Careful budgeting is key to making a success of this unforgettable journey; after all, few of us are in the position of having an endless pot of cash. While there are many effective ways to apply cost-saving strategies, it's essential to strike a balance between saving money and maintaining the integrity, safety and longevity of your home.

Working with a power team of engineers, architects and contractors from the beginning, to scope out your build and budget, is the best starting point. This will provide you with solid cost estimates, plus a strong steer on the structure, materials, fixtures and fittings that will suit your project, as well as your own wants and needs.

Architects and engineers suggest options based on the masterplan – and some of the choices presented to you will no doubt sit at the top of your budget. This will include build systems; heating, ventilation and cooling (HVAC); windows and doors; flooring; insulation; electrical and lighting systems; fixtures and fittings and more. Review these big-ticket items early on, so you can be sure you are getting quality, functional and efficient products – and not busting the budget before you even order the kitchen.

This process is called value engineering: a systematic approach to optimising design, materials and construction methods to get deliver your expectations on budget.

Cost-cutting with smart substitutions

Good value for money isn't just about the bottom line; it's about balance. Reducing project costs shouldn't mean compromising on quality or efficiency. Instead, aim to make smart choices that deliver the same performance and aesthetics without the premium price tag. Adopting a more creative mindset allows you to leverage the modern building technologies available and realise substantial savings, while maintaining the high standards you want.

A good example is PVCu windows, which are a popular cost-saving substitute for timber or aluminium frames. They offer excellent thermal efficiency, durability and a wide range of design options at significantly lower cost – and could be worth considering if your project uses fairly standard window sizes (they're not so good for architectural glazing, like vast picture windows). Similarly, opting for machined bricks instead of handmade varieties can slash expenses, while providing robust and attractive finishes.

Opting for mid-range solutions that balance style and durability – such as composite worktops instead of natural stone or engineered wood flooring instead of solid hardwood – can also make a huge difference on interior fixtures. These alternatives are more affordable and often easier to source and maintain, making them stylish, practical choices for budget-conscious self builders.

What you shouldn't compromise on

It's important that any substitutions you make don't compromise the integrity of the build. So, they need to be carefully researched to ensure compatibility with your overall design and performance requirements. Engaging professionals and suppliers early in the planning process can help identify where these cost-effective alternatives can be used most productively, ensuring you get best value without cutting corners.

Protecting & future-proofing your build

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The biggest loss of all would be if something goes awry on your project and you don't have adequate cover in place. So, cost-savvy self builders should always arrange site insurance throughout the duration of any build or renovation, as well as a structural warranty to cover your property against potential defects in design, workmanship and materials for 10 years from completion.

Appropriate research should be done to ensure you use a secure, 'A' rated provider. It's not advisable to cut costs by relying on an architect's or professional consultant's certificate, or by using a cheaper, unrated provider that doesn't offer an adequate amount of cover. A self build site insurance policy will protect the new construction work, existing structures and the entire site. Policy prices vary, but expect to pay between 0.5% and 1% of the overall build cost – so, a small fraction of your total spend in return for gaining confidence that any hiccups along the way will be covered.

By focusing on smart choices rather than shortcuts, you can achieve a self build project that combines affordability, quality and efficiency – turning your dream home into a reality without unnecessary compromises.

Jake Fitness is team leader at Self-Build Zone, which offers a comprehensive range of specialist self build, renovation, extension and site insurance cover, plus self build warranties. Call **0345 230 9874** or visit **www.selfbuildzone.com** for more

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HOW TO INSULATE suspended ground floors

Nigel Griffiths discusses how to retrofit this element of your home to ensure improved warmth and reduced energy bills

Above: A properly insulated floor will reduce draughts and improve comfort levels in your home

Bottom right: If you want to preserve original floorboards, they'll need to be lifted very carefully

This article explores strategies to retrofit existing suspended ground floors to minimise heat loss. Upper floors are not typically thermally insulated, as allowing heat to pass through aligns with the building's thermal strategy. While upper floors are often sound insulated, that is a separate consideration.

To start, you need to work out what kind of ground floor you have, and whether there is any insulation already in it. First, jump up and down a few times to see if the floor sounds hollow or vibrates. If it does, you probably have a suspended timber floor. If not, it's usually a concrete floor laid directly (on hardcore) on the ground, or a suspended concrete floor.

Next, check when your building was constructed. Floors in new buildings were required to be insulated from 1990 onwards. There will be exceptions, as some earlier dwellings had insulation built in and, equally, some after 1990 may have escaped the net.

If carpeted, lift the floor covering and see if there are timber (or composite) boards below, and how these are fixed to the joists. If you have a floating timber floor, then this is going to be tricky. Note that some floors may already have been retrofitted. If records are unavailable, you may need to inspect the floor by opening it up or finding an alternative method to examine the underside.

If your home was constructed after 1990, adding more insulation is generally unnecessary. Even minimal insulation is often effective, and retrofitting floor insulation tends to be disruptive and costly. Moreover, floors are not typically a major source of heat loss in buildings.

Existing timber floors

Suspended ground floors are a common feature in Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian houses, continuing into the 1930s and later, albeit with slight changes in construction methods. In earlier floors, boards are typically overlaid without tongue-and-groove joints –

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using a method that's known as butt-jointing. Over time, these boards shrink and warp, creating gaps that can allow draughts to form.

Air leakage, rather than conductive heat loss through the building fabric, is often the primary cause of heat loss in suspended floors. However, properly installed insulation can effectively address both of these issues, improving energy efficiency and comfort, too.

Ventilation

It's important to understand that sub-floor spaces were designed to be ventilated. So, before doing anything to your floor, you should first check that you have vents to the outside on at least two sides of the sub-floor zone (normally front and back in terraced housing), and that these vents are clear and unobstructed.

Inadequate ventilation (in the right position) can trap moisture in the sub-floor space, leading to decay, rot in the floor joists, and – worst case scenario – the total collapse of the floor structure. If vents are missing, try and examine similar nearby houses to identify their original placement, and then reinstate them where necessary to ensure proper ventilation.

If retrofitting insulation in the suspended floor is not feasible, consider replacing traditional vents with smart vents. These Wi-Fi and internet-connected, battery-powered devices can close vents when conditions permit, offering some energy savings. However, since technology and batteries can fail, it is crucial that powered vents default to the open position to prevent moisture buildup in sub-floor spaces.

Preparation

Unless you have an unusually deep sub-floor space, or an unheated cellar, insulating a suspended floor normally means lifting and removing the floorboards. Before doing that, any penetrations, such as radiator pipes, will need to be addressed.

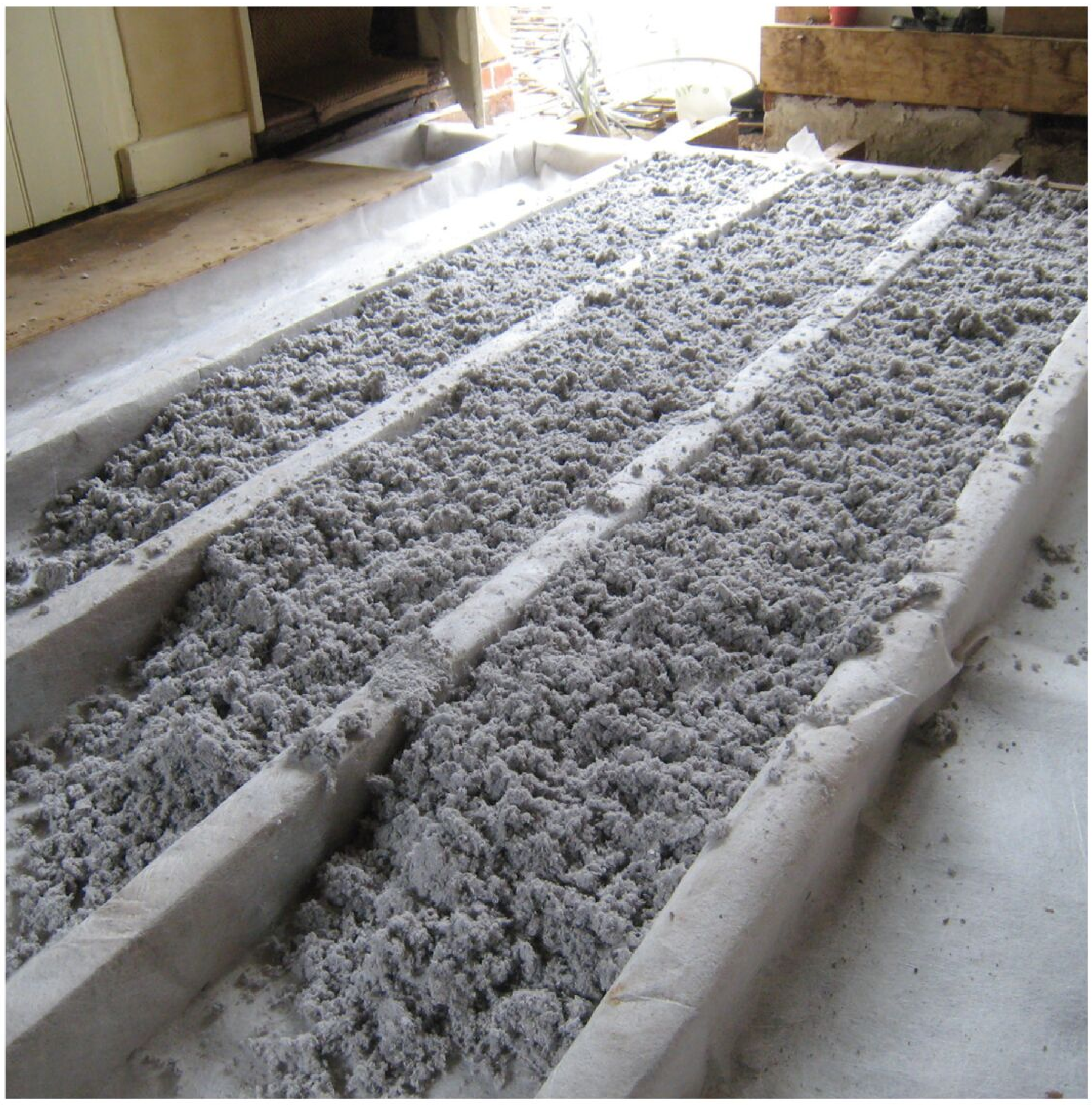
If you intend to reuse the floorboards it's best if they are removed by an experienced carpenter, as there are ways of doing this with minimal damage. Usually the boards will be butt-jointed rather than tongue and groove, so the main challenge is dealing with the floor brads or nails used to fix the boards to the joists.

Once the boards are removed, carefully check over the joist matrix, particularly at the ends where the joists rest on the supporting walls, as these are the points where rot most often occurs. Address the source of moisture and replace any damaged elements.

If you are considering taking on the job yourself, there are a number of health and safety considerations that you will need to address, including electrical services, radon gas, etc. You need to know where the fuseboard and all the relevant stop valves are located, and suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn. The health and safety requirements are set out in detail in the government's document 'Insulating suspended timber floors: best practice'.

Above: Airbricks allow air to circulate in the void beneath a suspended timber ground floor. New vents can be installed where required

Below: A membrane should be draped between the joists to hold the insulation and provide a windtight barrier. This install uses recycled cellulose insulation



ISTOCK.COM/ANGELICA CORNELIUSSEN

Above: Mineral wool is generally available in 400mm and 600mm widths to suit typical joist centres – but older floors don't always conform perfectly. Here, an extra slither of insulation has been added down the sides to achieve a tight fit

Insulation material & depth

Insulation for suspended timber floors is typically installed between the floor joists, with mineral wool batts being the preferred material. Mineral wool is cost-effective, easy to fit snugly due to its compressibility, it is breathable, which to allows vapor passage, and inert, making it fireproof and resistant to moisture. Plus, it avoids the use of plastics.

There are other insulation materials available (slightly greener, but usually more expensive), which might offer advantages in some circumstances, but mineral wool is a safe bet for this particular purpose. Mineral wool batts are not the same as loose rolls of glass fibre, which you may have used to protect your loft. Instead, they are semi-rigid blocks that can be cut to fit with a sharp knife, or even a saw. A good tip is to cut 10mm larger to allow for slight compression and ensure a tight fit.

If your floor joists are deeper than 150mm, then there is little point adding further insulation, so set the support at this depth. If your joists are less than 150mm, just fill the void (don't go any deeper). Whatever thickness you use (100-150mm), fit the insulation so it is level with the tops of the joists, to prevent air gap/circulation between the insulation and the boards. At the same time, it's best to avoid laying anything above the joist level (slight compression by the boards is fine).

Fitting

The most effective method for fitting insulation is to lay a membrane over the joists, and drape it between them. This serves a dual purpose: firstly, it creates a windproof layer (although it should be vapour-open to allow moisture to escape) and, secondly, it supports the insulation as it is positioned between the joists.

For precise installation, slim battens (no more than 6mm thick) can be fixed inside the membrane at the base of the joists or at the desired lowest point of the insulation. This establishes a fixed level for the bottom of the membrane, ensuring the top of the insulation aligns with the tops of the joists. Test the fit with insulation as you go to ensure accuracy. The slim battens allow the base of the insulation to compress slightly, preventing it from catching as it settles into place. A breathable vapour control membrane should be fitted on the warm side of the insulation (above the joists but below the floor deck) for airtightness.

At the floor's edges, there is often a small gap between the wall and the nearest joist. Depending on the gap's width size, this can be filled with mineral wool insulation from a roll, which is thinner and easier to manipulate in tight spaces.

QUICK GUIDE AIRTIGHTNESS

Preventing draughts is one of the most critical aspects of retrofitting suspended floor insulation. The membranes described in the article will address most air leakage, but achieving a super-airtight result requires a few additional steps.

For optimal airtightness, seal all overlaps and joints in the membrane, as well as any penetrations for pipes or cables. Some opt to install an additional membrane layer over the joists for extra protection. However, the floor-wall junction remains a common weak point. Addressing this effectively involves returning the airtightness membrane up the wall, but this requires removing skirting boards, which can be challenging to complete without causing damage.

When it comes to sealing floor-to-wall junctions, for carpeted floors, tuck the covering under the skirting board for added insulation. For hard floor finishes, try using a moulding with a gasket underneath to cover and seal any gaps.

ISTOCK.COM/ANNA GORDEEVA

Above: Floorboards have been lifted and replaced to enable the installation of mineral wool insulation in this project. An additional vapour control membrane, placed on the warm side of the boards, improves airtightness while minimising the risk of interstitial condensation

NIGEL GRIFFITHS

Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and is the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

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TIMBER FRAME COSTS
& WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR MONEY

Keen to understand what your timber home will cost to build? We look at the underlying costs and how your choices can impact on frame prices

Hugely popular among self builders, timber frame offers many benefits – from integrated energy efficiency through to fast build speeds and competitive pricing. Whether you're working on a tight budget or creating a high-end house, a big advantage of timber frame is you get a high degree of cost certainty. "Once the design is agreed, you know what the cost will be," says Jay Hubbard, managing director at English Brothers. That's because you're signing up to a fixed price package for the structural design, materials supply and – in many cases – the erection of your home's insulated structural shell on site. But just how much can you expect to pay?

The value of a timber frame package

Exactly what's included in your kit will vary between suppliers, so you should always interrogate quotes to fully understand what you're getting, but the standard package is pretty comprehensive. In general, you can expect the insulated panel kit with all the structural components included (glulams, steels etc), floor structure, floor deck, internal walls and the roof structure. "That's the basic timber frame kit, and all of that will be fully structurally engineered, with calculations prepped in advance and provided to the client on completion," says Jay.

For the self builder, there are numerous advantages to this approach – not least that you're getting a lot for your money. "Systems like timber frame, SIPs and oak frame aren't just four walls and a roof. They're a complete engineered solution at a fixed cost and by one person," says Simon Orrells, managing director at Frame Technologies.

For companies like English Brothers and Frame Technologies, the bread-and-butter is to sort all the structural design for you within the package: the insulated frame, foundations, Part O overheating calcs, psi values, Building Regs drawings, how cladding affixes and more. "We're not just drawing it, we've got to make it work – so we have the engineers and practical knowledge to tick all the boxes for building control," says Simon. Not only can this help speed up the process, because you don't have to run changes by multiple parties, but it maximises potential for both the design and the frame to be value-engineered.

The best approach is to engage your timber frame supplier just before you've got planning, so they can help rationalise the scheme before you apply. Above all, avoid starting detailed design without the manufacturer on board: this is a recipe for repeating work, as the plans will have to be amended to suit the supplier's system. "Even if an architect arranges the engineering, we'd prefer to redo it anyway," says Jay. "This means we can be confident the logistics of delivering and erecting a timber frame have been considered. I've seen engineers spec a 15m steel beam before, but how on earth are you going to get that in place? It would have to be re-engineered."

Above & inset: Initial quotes for a stone-built house from local contractors didn't offer the value-for-money Build It readers Rod and Trudy Molyneux were looking for, so they turned to Potton to make better use of their budget. The company provided structural design, manufacture and erection of the insulated house superstructure – plus mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system – for £99,978 (22% of the total build budget)

CLOSER LOOK KEY FACTORS THAT CAN IMPACT COSTS

There are plenty of variables to play with on a self build project – after all, realising your dream home is by its very nature an exercise in creating something bespoke to you, your plot and your budget. Here are some of the key factors:

- **The architecture.** The complexity of the design is a massive influence on price. Every time you turn a corner or add a roof valley, you're adding cost to the frame and follow-on works. "A lot of timber frames these days are actually a hybrid of timber and steel," says Mark. "A standard house on a developer-built estate won't need much of this, but the kind of thing that goes on the front of a magazine will need a lot of structural posts and beams."
- **Size.** Imagine you have a two-storey, rectangular design of 100m^2. "If you add a metre in the length and a metre in the depth, you're actually only adding 8m worth of timber frame panels; which is probably just £700 or £800. But you've significantly increased the property's square metreage" says Jay. "So, it's all the other costs, such as flooring, roof trusses, extra windows etc that will go up."
- **Roof design.** Again, this comes down to complexity. "You've got your bog standard, prefabricated roof trusses. They're a piece of cake and work out at about £15 per linear metre," says Jay. "Then you go up to attic trusses that are generally about £22 per m, depending on the pitch, and ultimately cut roofs with dormers etc. That's where things can become more expensive: while there's a similar amount of physical material in that roof, there's less prefabrication and more labour, as much of it will have to be hand-cut on site."
- **Habitable lofts.** If you want liveable attic space, you'll need a different – and more expensive – insulation solution, known as a warm roof. The airtightness detailing will need closer attention, too, all of which will add cost.
- **Thermal performance.** At the highest level, is the frame insulated or not? "Beyond that, you can specify varying degrees of insulation, U-values and airtightness detailing, which have a massive bearing on the cost," says Mark.
- **Glazing & spans.** Very wide spans or large openings, perhaps over multiple storeys (such as glazed gables), can have a major impact. "These will require a lot of structural steel or glulam," says Jay. "This adds not just the cost of the material, but also the cost of the lifting gear and extra labour to install it."
- **Cantilevers & overhangs.** Big, unsupported overhangs require a lot of hidden engineering and extra cost – but they can sometimes be designed-out, for instance by including supporting posts in strategic locations.
- **Vaulted ceilings.** Do you need a fully vaulted roof? "This costs four times as much to insulate and build compared to a flat roof; and where will you put your mechanical ventilation ducts?" says Simon. "You can get a similar wow factor with a semi-vaulted ceiling, while reducing costs and delivering practical benefits."
- **The supplier.** "Small, family-run businesses can turn out to be great value-for-money on a self build," says Mark. "They don't tend to have high overheads, so if they can buy well, they'll be able to offer very competitive prices. By contrast, a big business with a large factory and significant fixed costs might have different expectations."

None of these variables is specific to timber frame. They'll have an impact on the cost of building with pretty much any system, albeit it can be easier to navigate some of them with certain methods (for instance, pre-insulated lofts should be more straightforward to realise in SIPs).

Above: Set in a stunning coastal location, this high-spec 250m^2 self build home boasts excellent energy efficiency – achieving an A+ SAP rating. MBC Timber Frame's comprehensive offering, which included its Twin Wall system and Passivhaus airtightness package, represented just under 18% of the total project cost

KATY DONALDSON

Above: Build It readers the Horsteads combined a timber frame main house shell with SIPs panels for the roof of their ultra-modern self build, complete with vast open-plan spaces, vaulted ceilings and glazed gables. Provided by Target Timber Systems, the main frame package accounted for 21% of the build cost

Consider psi values, for instance, which are now under more scrutiny for Building Regs sign-off, following changes to Part L for energy efficiency. Yes, you could ask your architect to go off and get every thermal junction bespoke engineered – but your timber frame supplier will already have this information ready to go. "It's a science now," says Simon. "We can guarantee delivery of the exact performance you want, and we've done the technical work to prove it. "People often overestimate what it will cost to build with timber frame and assume that it's expensive; but we've already got a lot of what you need in our back pocket."

Jay agrees: "Even highly experienced quantity surveyors frequently get costs significantly wrong, sometimes by £10,000s," he says "They'll exclude the fact that the internal partition walls are all part of the package, that the insulation is included, the roof structure is there, all the structural beams and everything else are taken care of. So, they build in provisional sums for a timber frame kit that aren't required, because the price is the price."

What does a timber frame cost?

The best way to understand the potential cost of your timber frame is to call in quotes. After all, the price will vary depending on a range of factors, such as location, design complexity and whether your supplier is also providing any follow-on works, such as internal joinery.

As a rough guide, Simon suggests a base budget of £325-£350 per m^2 for a fairly standard self build spec (above Building Regs). This would include the detailed design, supply and erection of the insulated timber frame on site. There are various factors that will move the needle, from the insulation spec to whether you're incorporating large spans of glazing (see box, above, for more on this).

Another way of assessing it is how much of your total construction budget should be allocated to the timber frame. Looking back at past Build It reader homes, and entries into the Build It Awards, that's likely to be anything from 15% to 20%. Mark Stevenson of Elsworth Projects pins it down further: "A typical insulated timber frame should be about 18%-20% of your build budget," he says. "Of course, that will be a different amount of money each time. This percentage is normalised; it will skew the budget if, for instance, you plan to spend £100k on a luxury kitchen."

What it does give you is a comparison point for sense-checking when looking at quotes. Is the price you've been given ahead or behind – and what are the reasons? "As a project manager, I'll assess the complexity of the build, spec and U-values, and then give clients some commentary around how the price matches up," says Mark.

These days, a typical completed self build home might come in at around £2,500-£3,500 per m^2, depending on size and spec. If the frame accounts for 19% of that, you're looking at around £475-£665 per m^2 for your engineered, supplied and erected timber kit. To get towards the £350 per m^2 mark, you'd be looking at more like £2,000 per m^2 for the finished house. That's challenging but not impossible, especially if you're going for a basic spec, taking on a significant amount of the project management and perhaps completing some of the follow-on works yourself.

Assuming you're going with a supply-and-erect service, around 30%-40% of your frame quote will be accounted for by the cost of assembling it on site. This will be affected by local labour prices, as well as how close the install team live to your site – if they don't need hotel rooms or expensive travel, you'll be nearer the bottom of that bracket.

"It's a meaningful cost and, depending on how they view it, the manufacturer may or may not apply a margin on top," says Mark. "Some companies see the erect as an enabling service that allows them to sell the product they make in the factory, and let it wash through. Others think of it as extra liability for them, and turnover that should have a return."

Calling in quotes

Prices per m^2 have their place. They're particularly useful in the very early stages, when you're exploring what you might be able to afford. But they should only ever be a starting point: as soon as you step away from a fairly straightforward, box-shaped design, start to play with the total house size or change the spec, the whole picture changes.

"It's a dangerous game to try to compare timber systems to, say, masonry on a price per m^2 basis, because they're so different. You're not getting all the elements from a blockwork build that you would in a timber frame package," says Jay. "The way we approach it is, send us your plans and we'll quote it – and then you've got a proper, accurate price."

Putting in an enquiry gives you an informed cost straight from the horse's mouth, rather than relying on assumptions. "Getting a price for the kit from the actual supplier, for an agreed design, takes all the variables away," says Mark. "I'd expect quotes back in two to three weeks, although disappointingly it sometimes takes more like a month."

In the early stages, most suppliers will be happy to give an initial budget estimate based on sketch drawings, either to scale or with measurements on, which will be robust enough to use for mortgage purposes. "For a more accurate quote we'd want to see final approved planning drawings, as they often differ from the sketches," says Jay.

The further along you are on the design journey, the more likely it is that the costs will be fixed and accurate. "We have had clients who have come back to us 18 months after an initial estimate, and the design is completely different – but in their heads they've used a per m^2 price they worked out from that early price and tried to pro rata it up," says Jay. An object lesson in why it's essential to call in specific quotes for the plans you want to build.

Whether the price you're quoted feels reasonable or not, it's worth taking a step back. For starters, you should ideally call in three quotes to give yourself comparison points. It's also always worth talking with the manufacturer about how the design could be simplified to streamline costs. "Ask them how they would change things to get the cost down, if they were building this house for themselves," says Mark. "They'll understand where the load paths are, where the big steels are and where things could be tweaked. By inviting the discussion, you're more likely to save money."

DOUGLAS GIBB

Above: The Happells' compact, 68m^2 self build in Stirling features a pre-insulated timber frame by Fleming Homes. "We chose the system for its speed and price," they say. "The remote location and unpredictable weather meant we wanted to get the house watertight as quickly as possible." It can be difficult to achieve economies of scale on a smaller project, but Fleming translated the design into a buildable reality, with the frame package representing 24% of the project costs

Payment terms

As the frame will be prefabricated to your chosen design, you'll be expected to pay for it relatively early in the process. A typical arrangement might be a 25% deposit to enable manufacture, with the rest due in instalments up to delivery – plus installation costs once it's on site.

Lenders specialising in self build are fully aware of the cashflow needs on this kind of project, but it's important to make sure your stage payments reflect the capital outlay. Generally, you'll want an advance mortgage product when specifying an offsite-manufactured system, so the cash is released before payment is due.

Future costs

Every new build home will need some kind of maintenance a few years down the line. In the case of timber frame, the superstructure will shrink slightly in height as it dries out. "This is because the section size of the timber used at floor zones and sole plates shrinks," says Mark. "You'll get up to about 6mm per storey, but provided you've got the detail right with the claddings, the exterior finish will be designed to slip so you don't even notice it." In other words, that 10mm gap that was left at the bottom of the cladding will simply become 4mm. Your timber frame manufacturer will be able to sort through all of this at the technical design stage; yet another way they can add value.

You'll get a little bit of internal movement, too. This will take the form of a few hairline cracks in the plasterboard – which, of course, is attached to the frame via battens. "All it takes is a bit of decorator's filler and a touch of paint, and it's fine," says Mark. "You get the same issues with masonry builds, too; they just exhibit the cracks in different places." Ultimately, the quality of the build is a factor. Any well-designed, well-put-together house will fare better than something that's poorly detailed and assembled.

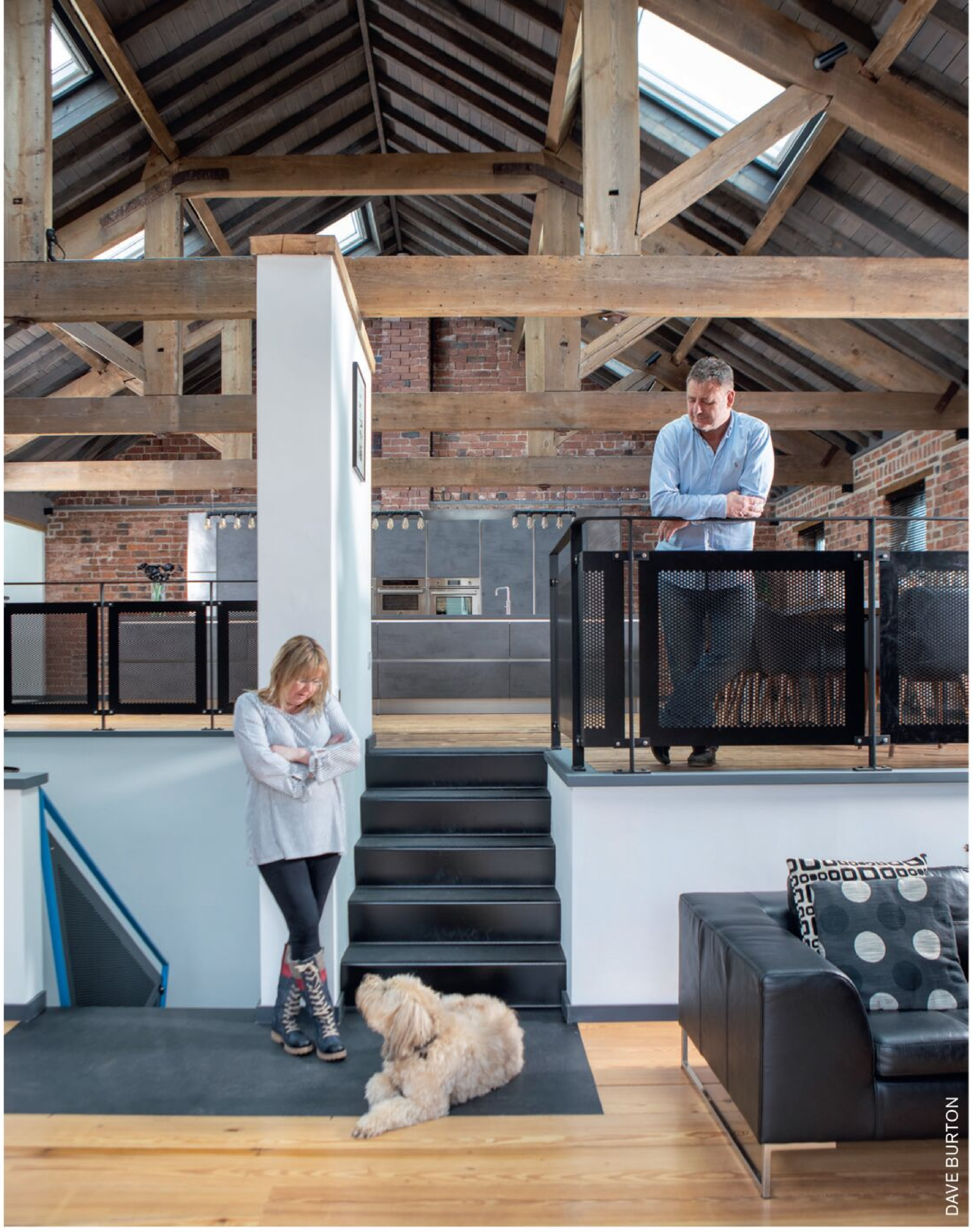
CONTACTS **English Brothers** 01945 427985 www.eb-bespoke.co.uk **Fleming Homes** 01361 883785 www.fleminghomes.co.uk **Frame Technologies** 01544 267124 www.frametechnologies.co.uk **MBC Timber Frame** 01452 346499 www.mbctimberframe.co.uk **PMR Architecture** 01626 572250 www.pmr-architecture.co.uk **Potton** 01767 676400 www.potton.co.uk **Target Timber Systems** 01403 782600 www.targettimber.com **Timber Pak** 01752 710289 www.timber-pak.co.uk

Period property expert, Alan Tierney, sets out why this stage of a renovation is key to the success of your finished project

Before you commit to buying a house, it's essential to have a structural survey carried out to assess the condition of the building and make sure that it's a reasonable investment rather than a money pit. If you're getting a mortgage, it's likely to be a requirement, although your chosen lender will probably also send out their own surveyor – typically for valuation purposes.

If you're planning to renovate an older building, it's vital that you have a good understanding of the structure to ensure you're aware of any limitations you may face.

Building surveyors are regulated by The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), which specifies three levels of survey with differing degrees of detail. Only level three, the most detailed, is of any value for an older building. The RICS and Historic England have recently produced a guidance document for surveyors relating to the investigation of moisture and its effects on traditional buildings. This Joint Position Statement 2022 (JPS 2022) should inform your survey.


DAVE BURTON

Structural surveys

Top & left: Michael and Erica Hammill transformed a dilapidated mechanical garage into their ideal family home. Michael, a chartered surveyor, was able to assess what was salvageable and what needed replacing. The rafters and slate roof had to be removed and the entire roof needed insulating to ensure a comfortable interior

Right: It's key to identify any damaged brickwork that may need repairing or repointing. This wall has been impacted by a leaking gutter, so water has saturated the brickwork, causing it to fail

Below: A formal survey will set out the difference between cosmetic and structural issues, and list the repair work needed to bring the property up to standard

What limitations could you face?

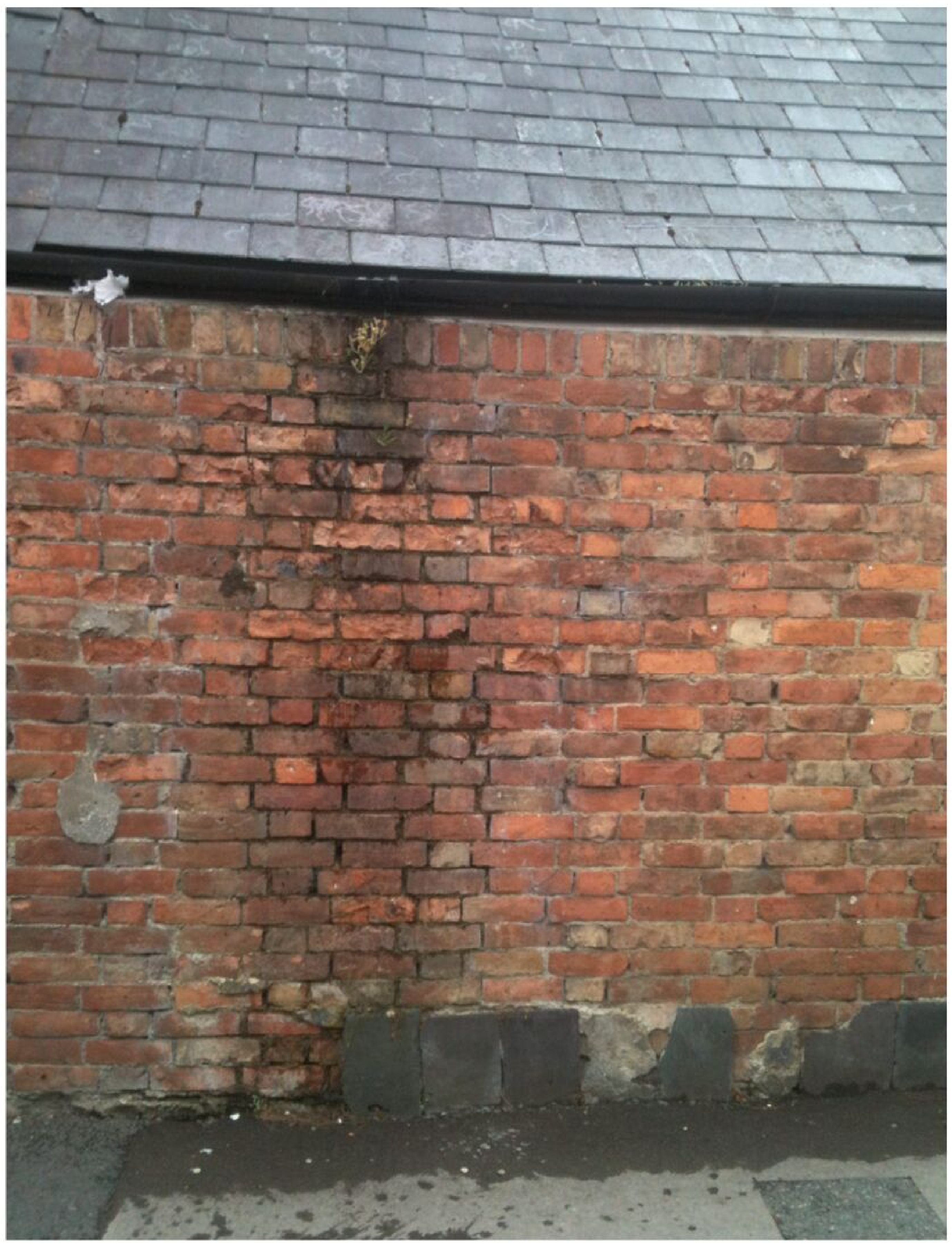
The surveyor will only inspect those parts of a building that are deemed to be safely accessible – how this is defined can vary greatly from one surveyor to another. Unfortunately, many potential problems with older buildings are inevitably in inaccessible areas and they often don't come to light until major work is being carried out. This leads to two difficulties: you cannot be sure that there are no hidden horrors buried in the house and, because the surveyor quite reasonably doesn't want to be held liable for something they couldn't see, your final survey will be so hedged with caveats and exclusions you can feel reluctant to rely too heavily on it.

The older a house is, the more likely it is to have been altered in the past. Each modification has the potential to change the structural performance of the building, sometimes setting up very complex situations. It can be impossible to fully interpret the likely consequences or revised load paths etc caused by these modifications.

Traditionally constructed buildings are a relatively small part of a surveyor's workload and comprise a correspondingly minor element of their training. As a result, they rarely have a detailed understanding of these properties. This varies enormously but there are very few specialists, meaning that some surveys can be extremely difficult for buyers to interpret.

What issues could crop up?

Overinterpretation Most older buildings will have suffered damage, decay and deterioration during their long lifetimes. This is often historic, long-since resolved or of no structural significance. However, making that judgement can be difficult, particularly for non-specialists, and natural caution can result in an alarming list of apparent defects that are nothing to worry about.



Incompatibility Conversely, much damage or potential damage in traditional buildings results from inappropriate modern interventions – mostly involving the use of impervious materials such as cement or masonry paints. If these are relatively recent and in good condition, they can look fine to the modern eye so are frequently missed, even where they have potentially serious consequences.

Specialist surveys The most frustrating issue can be that a possible defect is identified by the surveyor, usually relating to damp or timber decay. Rather than giving an

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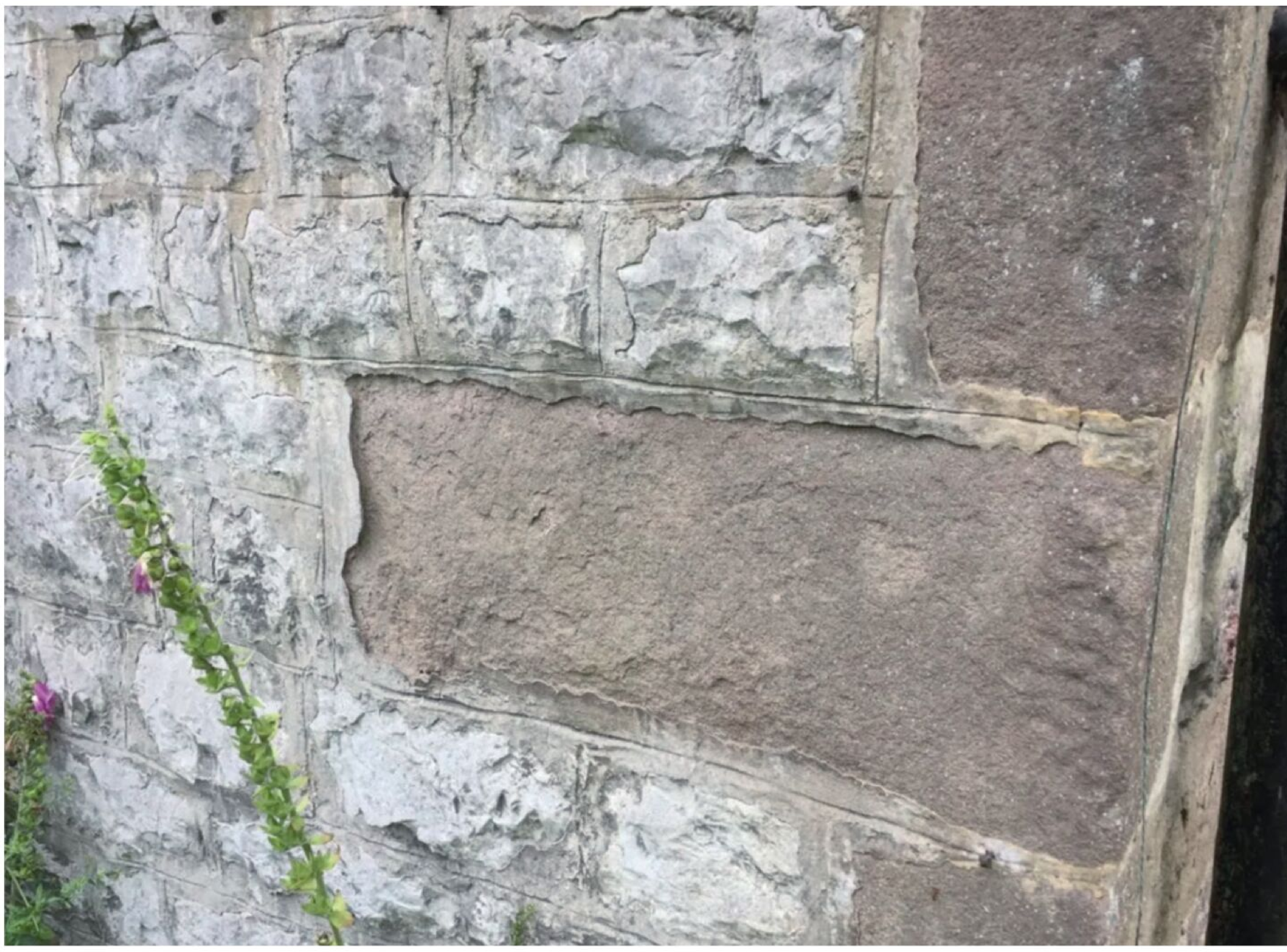
Right: Use of inappropriate cement pointing has caused the face to blow off this stone wall



assessment, a recommendation is made for a specialist surveyor to be engaged (at further expense) to look at it. Unfortunately, there are not really any such people. Specialist damp and timber surveys are carried out by representatives of treatment companies whose opinion cannot be considered impartial.

Inappropriate recommendations

All of the above can lead to suggestions from the survey for unnecessary or inappropriate work to be carried out. Sometimes this is pointless – such as most recommendations for woodworm treatment (also beware that this inevitably requires the spraying of toxic chemicals inside your house).

The work recommended can actually be potentially damaging to the building. The most serious and notorious is specification of an injected damp-proof course into solid walled buildings. In the worst case, mortgage providers have made this work a requirement, subject to a retention on the mortgage, because of a survey recommendation. Even with highly qualified expert representation it can be extremely challenging to have such a ruling reversed.

How can you overcome these issues?

The best way to avoid these problems is to engage a surveyor who is also a specialist in historic buildings. They do exist but are unfortunately quite rare.

The next best option is to make sure that your building surveyor has extensive experience with traditionally constructed buildings and a good understanding of how they work. The best way to achieve this is via recommendation from someone you know and trust who has direct experience of a surveyor. If this isn't an option, you will have to rely to an extent on the surveyor's own information – just be careful to interrogate them closely, looking out for references to traditional construction, breathability, vapour permeability, lime etc. Check that they are familiar with JPS2022 – if not, go elsewhere. You will obviously benefit, too, from doing a bit of homework beforehand.

Once you have your survey, ask a specialist in building conservation to look over it for you. They will be able to interpret it, hopefully put your mind at rest about some of the alarming aspects and draw attention to matters that might be more serious than suggested. In straightforward cases this can be just a paper exercise. If the house is in poor condition or a potentially serious issue is identified, a site visit and thorough inspection might be required. People who work on old buildings all the time have a strong sense of their condition, structural soundness and renovation potential. They should be able to give you a good indication of how the building matches up to your requirements in terms of viability, extent of work required, element of risk and probable cost. In extreme cases of structural concern, it might also be necessary to engage a structural engineer to make an assessment. Because of the very different behaviour of historic buildings to modern homes, it must be an engineer who specialises in this area.

You obviously can't simply start pulling a building apart to find what nasty surprises it might be hiding before purchase. Hence, however thorough you are at this stage, there will always be a degree of the unknown when working with old properties. It's key to have a fund set aside to deal with anything that might come to light once you are in possession. I always advise anybody undertaking a period renovation to have a contingency of 20% in their project budget.

It's possible that after reading this article, some of you might decide it's all too risky and decide to steer clear of old buildings. In reality, these houses are very resilient. They have stood for many years (sometimes hundreds) so those that have survived were very well constructed. In my experience, though, far more people have found major problems having moved into a standard new build than a period property.

ALAN TIERNEY

Alan is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran a historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to the owners of heritage homes, but is now focused on renovating Old Barnstaple House.

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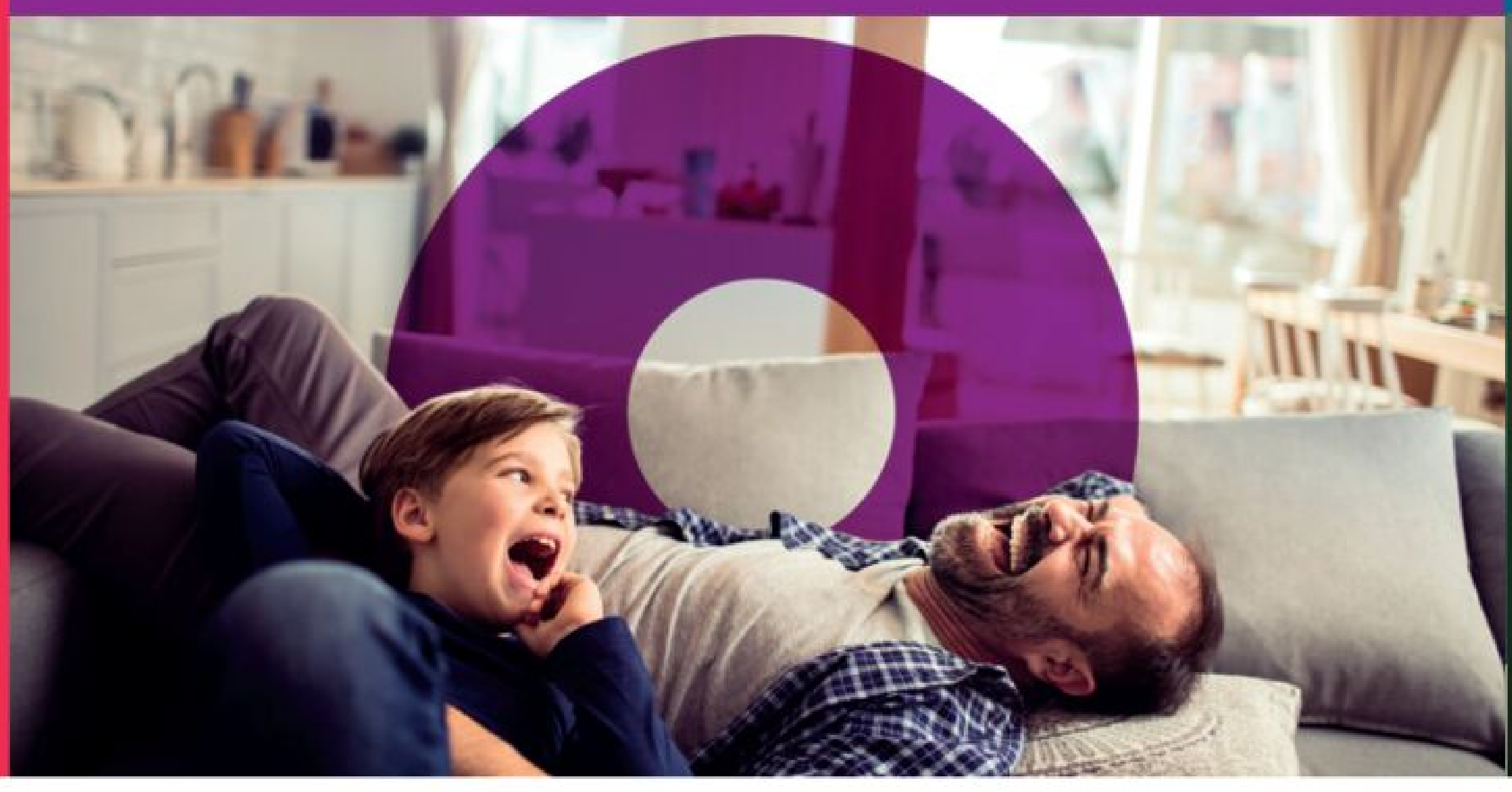

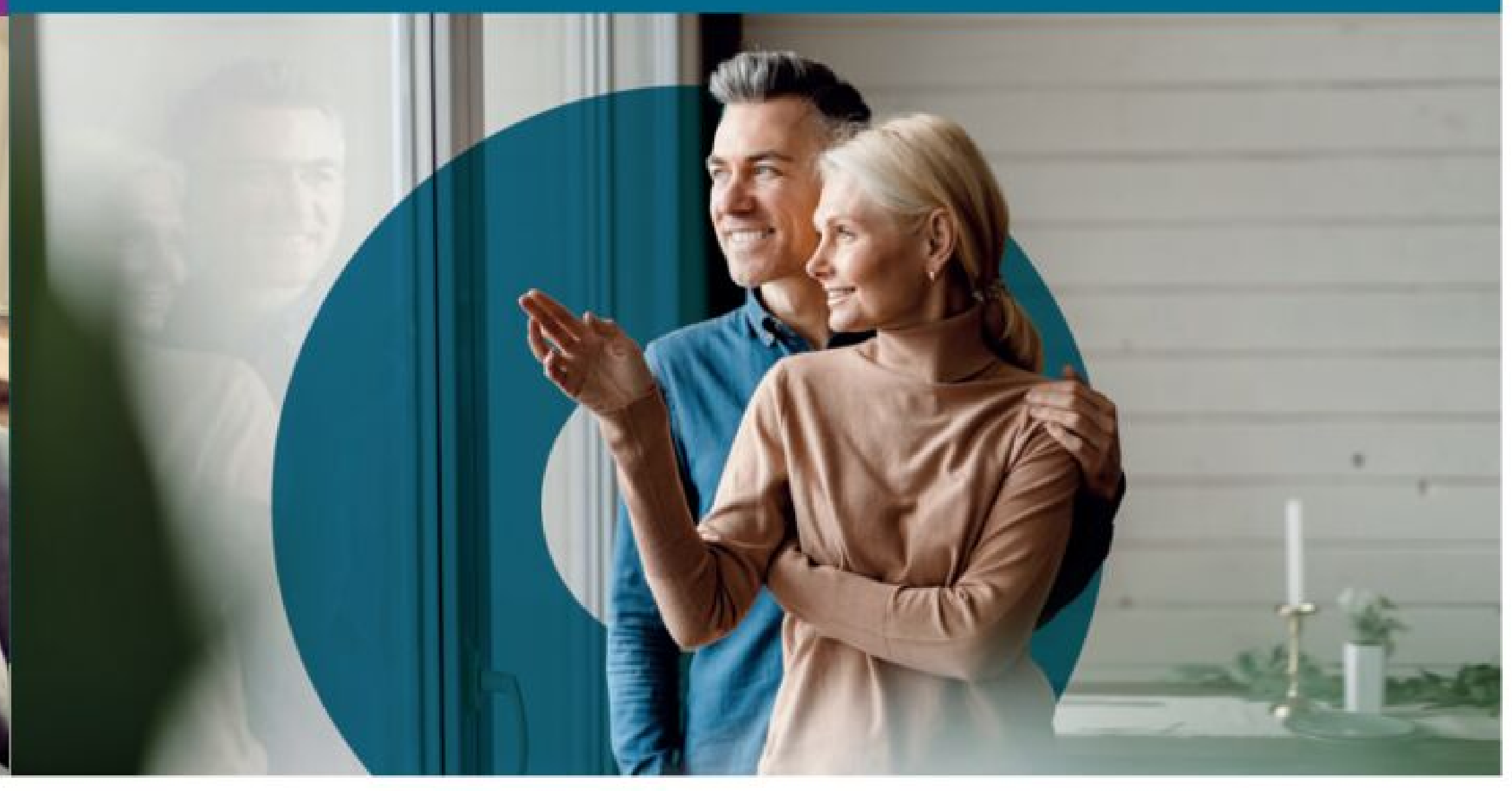

EXPOSURE PHOTO AGENCY

FOCUS ON
Permitted development

Are you looking to enhance your property but unsure whether you need planning permission? This could be the answer, says Julia Riddle, allowing you to undertake certain works without a full application

Above: After his plans to build from scratch were rejected by the planners, Build It reader Jamie Davison realised he could convert an existing barn under Class Q rules (a type of permitted development)

SHUTTERSTOCK / ROF F WYLAM

Right: Installing solar panels is considered permitted development

Permitted development (PD) rights allow you to carry out specific works on buildings and land without needing planning permission. For residential properties, this includes interior alterations and certain building operations that do not significantly change the external appearance of the property. Permitted development rights also cover some changes in property use, such as converting a building to residential use.

While these rights can simplify many home improvement projects, navigating the rules is not always as straightforward as it seems. Knowing what qualifies and how to ensure compliance is the key to unlocking the benefits of PD with confidence.

Key considerations

Permitted development rights are a complex area of planning. It should be obvious – the rules allow for a 3m depth single storey extension to a dwelling, for example. But why can't you just get on and build such an extension with confidence? There are two main issues to consider; firstly, there are many situations and circumstances where, for some reason, the rights might not exist. Secondly, even where it is possible, there is likely to be some form of process to follow.

Permitted development rights for residential properties apply specifically to the 'original dwelling' – ie the property as it was first built or as it existed in 1947. This is a crucial distinction, as any previous extensions may have already used part or all of the permitted development allowance. For instance, if extensions have increased the depth of the property by 3m or more from the original dwelling, further additions will typically require planning permission. As a result, homes with a history of extensions are often subject to more restrictive permitted development options. To plan future works effectively, it's essential to investigate any past changes to the property. Understanding its development history ensures you approach further alterations with clarity and compliance.

If a property benefits from permitted development rights, it is highly advisable to secure a certificate of lawfulness for any work carried out under these rights. This document serves as formal confirmation that the development complies with regulations and does not require planning permission. Obtaining this record is not only prudent during the planning process but also invaluable when selling the property. Future buyers may request proof that previous developments were lawful and didn't require additional permissions, helping to ensure a smoother transaction and peace of mind for all parties.

What is covered under PD?

Where permitted development rights can be used, they allow for some quite significant changes to a property. These include projects such as:

- Internal works to an existing property
- Loft conversions
- Insulation or cladding (of a similar appearance)
- Replacement windows
- Single-storey ground floor rear extensions – up to 4m in depth for a detached property or 3m for a semi-detached or terraced property
- First-floor rear extensions – up to 3m in depth
- Solar panels – on the roof or freestanding
- Decking – covering no more than 50% of the existing garden
- Paving to the front of the house to be permeable only
- Outbuildings within certain parameters; incidental to the use of the dwelling and covering no more than 50% of the garden, to the rear or side of the property

Extended rights

Since 2015, the Government has brought in several iterations of 'extended' permitted development rights. These allow for more development than the original rights, but there is a different process to be followed to achieve the go-ahead for your project via this route, known as a 'Prior Approval' process.

These rights relate not only to the development of properties, but also its use. This is particularly relevant in terms of the extended PD rights that allow for the change of use to a residential dwelling without going through a full planning application process. These are the alterations such as commercial to residential use (Class MA) and agricultural to residential use (Class Q).

It should also be noted that the information required for a prior approval submission is more similar to a full planning application than a certificate of lawfulness. A prior approval submission is likely to require plans of the proposals, details of flood risk, noise, transport and traffic information. This all varies depending on the exact type of change you are looking to make, so it is always beneficial to confirm this before making a submission. The extended rights in terms of physical development to a dwelling allow for:

- Single-storey ground floor rear extensions – up to 8m for a detached property, or 6m for a semi-detached or terraced homes
- Upward extensions to properties

When using extended permitted development rights, the council will notify your neighbours once your submission is made. If they object to the proposal, it cannot proceed through this route and will require a full planning application. In many cases, the level of development permitted under these extended rights may not align with the council's planning policies and would not gain approval through the traditional routes. It is important to anticipate where such conflicts may arise and carefully assess the potential impact on neighbours.

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- **Permitted development rights** can enable quite significant works to a property without needing planning permission.
- **Check if you have these rights**, as there are many cases where they have been 'used up', removed or a property is excluded from these rights due to its sensitive location.
- **Be sure that using** PD really gives you the outcome you want, and consider using a combination of PD and planning permission.
- **Even if works can be done** under PD, always consider seeking a certificate of lawfulness, and remember you will still need Building Control sign off to ensure a safe, comfortable final outcome.

LUCA PIFFARETTI

Above: George & James Architects (www.georgeandjames.co.uk) skilfully used permitted development rights to design a transformative single-storey extension in London

Left: Mike Tuck Studio (www.miketuck.co.uk) fulfilled permitted development requirements by matching this loft conversion's exterior cladding with the home's existing roof tiles

Building a positive relationship and discussing your plans with them beforehand can help minimise objections and improve the chances of a successful outcome

Full planning application or PD?

It is vital to establish early on whether your property benefits from PD rights if you are hoping to pursue works

Above: You can update any external door to your home by adding a small porch, up to 3m high and 3m² in floor area. It must be at least 2m away from any boundary with a highway, too. Take inspiration from this charming single-storey Oakwrights (www.oakwrights.co.uk) home

Top right: You can install rooflights under PD rights. The slim frame and invisible sash on this Velux (www.velux.co.uk) unit, which is available both double or triple glazed, help to ensure maximum natural light

Right: The installation of an air source heat pump on a domestic property is considered permitted development. Pictured is NIBE's (www.nibe.co.uk) F2040-6 ASHP

using this approach. There are many circumstances where they do not apply. This may be where they were removed from a property when it was granted planning permission or where the council have issued an Article 4 Direction, which takes away permitted development rights from either a single property or from an area. This can be checked with the council or on the planning decision notice for the property when it was built.

Permitted development rights will also not usually apply in certain protected areas including conservation areas, areas of outstanding natural beauty, national parks, the broads or in proximity to world heritage sites.

You should always consider the outcome when using a permitted development approach. Think about what you want to achieve in terms of works to your property and then whether they can be secured via this route. Or early on, seek advice so you understand what the permitted development rights option might look like, so you have this is as your fall back position. But, if you can achieve a better outcome for the long term by pursuing a planning application, it might be worth trying for this first. Much of this will depend on your time, cost and risk priorities.

There may be situations where combining PD rights with planning consent is the best approach to achieve the desired works and changes. This strategy can allow certain home projects to begin sooner, while waiting for planning permission approval for other elements. This approach can be discussed with the council through a pre-application process, which will help to clarify whether you'll require planning permission for specific works or if they fall under permitted development rights. Following the correct process and engaging relevant professionals is essential, as it significantly reduces stress and uncertainty, regardless of the chosen route.

Even if planning permission is not required for your project, it is important to remember that other types of approval, such as listed building consent, may still be necessary. Additionally, all of the works must comply with Building Regulations, and securing a separate Building Regulations approval is always required.

JULIA RIDDLE

Julia Riddle is a planning consultant with experience in advising on a range of commercial and residential development. She runs Castle Planning (www.castleplanning.uk) and has written guidance to inform the national approach to Custom and Self Build and is a member of the Right to Build Task Force.

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Self build & custom build mortgage table

Looking to fund your bespoke home project? Each month we round up the best deals from leading lenders and update you on what you need to know to secure the right finance

Advance Stage Payment Mortgages

Created by and exclusive to BuildStore, these mortgages provide guaranteed stage payments based on your costs before each phase of the build. This offers certainty in your budget and peace of mind that you can plan for and pay your bills on time.

Arrears Stage Payment Mortgages

These mortages release funds after each stage of building works is completed. To trigger the payments, a valuation must take place that shows an uplift in value. BuildStore's exclusive mortgages can offer increased borrowing of up to 85% of your costs.

Get In Touch

For advice on funding options for your self or custom build project, speak to the experts at BuildStore by calling **0345 223 4647** or visit **www.buildstore.co.uk**

These products are chosen for illustrative purposes, and were available at the time of going to press.

KEY FOR TABLE: ★ BuildStore Exclusive Product | SB Self Build Mortgage | CB Custom Build Mortgage | LTV Loan to Value

Lender		Mortgage Type	Payment Schedule	Contact	LTV Land	LTV End Value	Interest Rate	1st Stage Payment
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.44%	DPP & Building Regs
Buckinghamshire BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.49%	DPP & Building Regs
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.34%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	DPP & Building Regs
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.24%	DPP & Building Regs
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.39%	DPP & Building Regs
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.30%	DPP & Building Regs
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.80%	DPP & Building Regs
Tipton & Coseley	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.14%	DPP & Building Regs
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Advance	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	7.05%	DPP & Building Regs
Bath BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	95%	85%	6.24%	Foundations
Buckinghamshire BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	6.35%	Foundations
Chorley BS	★	SB &CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	50%	70%	5.95%	Foundations
Darlington BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	6.14%	Foundations
Furness BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	70%	70%	5.73%	Foundations
Furness BS (Green Build)	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.99%	Foundations
Hinckley & Rugby BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	80%	6.29%	Foundations
Mansfield BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	80%	80%	5.95%	Foundations
Newcastle BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	90%	90%	6.60%	Foundations
Stafford Railway BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	75%	6.40%	Foundations
Tipton & Coseley BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	75%	75%	5.74%	Foundations
Vernon BS	★	SB & CB	Arrears	0345 223 4647	85%	80%	6.89%	Foundations
Beverley BS		SB	Arrears	01482 881 510	50%	80%	6.19%	Wall Plate
Earl Shilton BS		SB	Arrears	01455 844 422	75%	75%	6.69%	Flexible
Hanley BS		SB	Arrears	01782 255000	60%	60%	5.99%	Foundations
Melton Mowbray BS		SB	Arrears	01664 414 141	n/a	75%	6.09%	Foundations
Saffron BS		SB & CB	Arrears	0333 015 2970	75%	75%	5.99%	Flexible
Suffolk BS		SB	Arrears	0330 123 0723	80%	80%	5.95%	Foundations

Ask the EXPERTS

Essential advice on your problems with building, budgeting, DIY & planning from the most experienced names in the self build industry

PLANNING
Martin Gaine runs planning consultancy Just Planning (www.just-planning.co.uk). A former case officer, he has experience on both sides of the planning divide and now specialises in helping homeowners win consent at appeal. He is the author of How to Get Planning Permission: An Insider's Secrets.

FINANCE
Rachel Pyne is director of financial services at BuildStore (www.buildstore.co.uk). She has worked in self build finance for over 10 years and deals with a diverse portfolio of lenders across the whole market, as well as on exclusive self build and renovation mortgage products.

SUSTAINABILITY
Nigel Griffiths specialises in sustainable construction and eco-renovation and was the author of the Haynes Eco House Manual. He advises UK government on retrofit programmes and inspects renewable heat installations on behalf of Ofgem. You can chat to Nigel at the Build It Live shows.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Mark Stevenson has worked as a construction professional for over 35 years and is a serial self builder. He runs project management consultancy Elsworth Projects and, as chair of NaCSBA, advocates for the interests of self builders and contributes to the success of the emerging custom build industry.

PERIOD PROPERTIES
Alan Tierney is a period property and conservation specialist. He ran an historic building consultancy, offering hands-on advice to heritage homeowners, but is now focused on renovating yet another property: Old Barnstaple House.

DESIGN
Opinder Liddar is a director at Lapd Architects (www.lapdarchitects.co.uk). The practice specialises in residential projects from extensions to new builds, making him the ideal person to answer all your home design questions.

VAT RECLAIMS
Andrew Jones has worked within the construction industry for almost 40 years. With 15 years of experience processing DIY VAT reclaims (www.vat431.co.uk), he provides invaluable insight for self builders.

PLANNING

How can I work out an estimate for the cost of land with outline planning permission (OPP)?

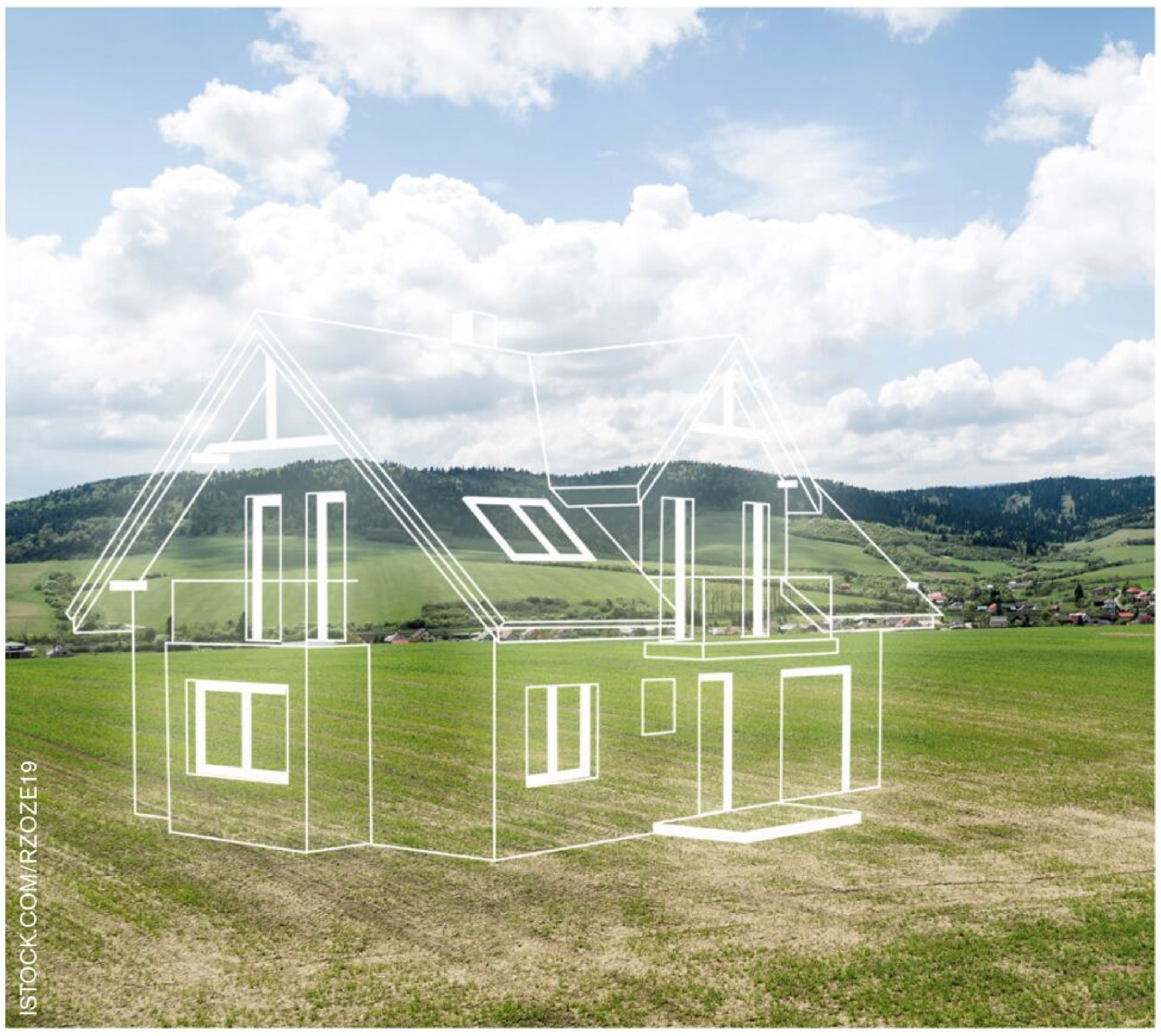
We have found some land which is currently barren and hasn't had any use for over 20 years. After a search on the Land Registry, we contacted the owner via letter. We have kept in touch with the landowner and after three months of talks he is going to apply for OPP. We have asked for a rough estimate of what he would want for the site, but he mentioned a land agent would need to be appointed to get a quote. Is there any other way to estimate the value?

It is not easy to work out what to offer for a piece of land when you first come across it. The usual approach is to establish the value of what you will ultimately build on it (the finished house) and then deduct all of your project costs, including a notional profit (although you are not a property developer, you would still want to add value to your home). The number you are left with, known as the residual, is what the land is worth to you.

To work out the rough numbers, speak to local estate agents to get a sense of the final value of your proposed house and use the build cost calculator on the Build It website (www.self-build.co.uk/calculator) to estimate the price of the works.

Aside from the residual valuation method, there is also the comparison approach, whereby you compare the land to similar sites that have recently sold in the area. Estate agents can also help you with estimations; as can looking through specialist listing sites, such as PlotBrowser.com.

Before making any firm offers, I would recommend that you take a look on the RICS website (www.rics.org) for the services of a surveyor in your area with knowledge of land valuations.



ISTOCK.COM/RZOZE19

Above: Land prices can vary hugely based on factors such as location, plot size, surrounding landscape, services already on site, the housing market and if the site already has planning permission in place

VAT RECLAIMS

Can I have some advice on the VAT rules regarding electricity, water and broadband installation?

Our project is a garden development of a new house that will become our main residence, so we qualify for a zero VAT rating under the DIY housebuilder scheme. UK Power has said we have to pay standard VAT and reclaim it, but I have seen conflicting advice. What's the right approach?

On a new build, any trade visiting site for qualifying services should not be charging VAT. HMRC will not repay any VAT that's been incorrectly applied – and, in your case, your instinct is right that UK Power Network should not be charging you VAT for its part of the work. To go into more detail, you specifically mentioned electric supply, water and broadband, but I will add gas to your list as well. Of those four, all are qualifying works for the VAT 431NB scheme, except for broadband. So, the new supply of gas, water or electric should be charged at zero percent VAT for the materials and the work of bringing the new supply into the site at source. This statement applies to the work of getting the supply to your property only, so potential additional costs such as licencing, temporary traffic lights or testing fees would not qualify and would be chargeable, not reclaimable.

For a replacement dwelling, however, where the current supply of the above three are disconnected and then reconnected to the new property, this type of work does not qualify. In this case, VAT would again be chargeable and not reclaimable.

ISTOCK.COM/KELVINJAY

Always make sure to seek advice from a VAT specialist if you are unsure whether any of your works qualify for the DIY Housebuilder scheme. Contact the HMRC's VAT helpline for guidance on your personal claim

PROJECT MANGEMENT

What is considered a meaningful start date that can be signed off by building control?

I have received planning approval to demolish and rebuild a single residential property. I would like to start the work, as it has been signed off by building control, but the clock soon stops on the three-year planning approval. Would the demolition of one of two attached garages count as a meaningful start and allow building control sign off?

To answer this question, it's important to first understand what a meaningful start is in terms of planning law. This refers to the point at which development has lawfully commenced in accordance with the permission that has been granted. Making a meaningful start within the time limits specified (typically three years from the decision date) is critical and without the proof that this was achieved, the permission will be lost.

The definition of what constitutes a meaningful start is outlined in Section 56 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. For a development to be considered as having begun, there must be evidence that work has started on the erection of the building. This can include, for example, digging trenches for foundations, laying of underground pipes or cables, or demolition of any existing structure.

Coming back to the question of whether demolition of one of the single garages is sufficient, strictly speaking, it is – provided that the garage demolition is part of the planning approval. The application of law is subject to opinion, so it would be best practice to confirm with the local authority that they agree that this approach is acceptable.

I would also add it's important to remember that before a material start can take place, any pre-commencement conditions attached to the planning permission must be resolved. The start of construction work will also trigger any community infrastructure levy liabilities, so if you're a self builder, make sure you've claimed your exemption in advance.

ISTOCK.COM/ILCPHOTO

Above: It is crucial to carefully review the planning permission to ensure you discharge any relevant conditions, and document all actions to help demonstrate the works comply with all relevant regulations

ANY QUESTIONS? **Send all your self build, renovation and conversion questions to buildit@castlemedia.co.uk or visit www.self-build.co.uk/question Please note all correspondence may be published in the magazine**

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FIND YOUR DREAM BUILDING PLOT

PlotBrowser.com is a 100% free-to-use plot and property finder, packed with 1,000s of home building opportunities. Here's a taster of the fantastic self build plots, renovation properties and conversions currently for sale near you

PlotBrowser.com is the latest addition to Build It's series of powerful project tools (**www.buildit.co.uk/tools**) designed to put you on the path to self build success.

Updated daily, this is your dedicated resource for finding genuine self build land and renovation opportunities. You'll find 1,000s of plots and properties to view nationwide, and each listing features the site details, photos, guide price and sellers' contact information – including details such as whether the plot or property is being sold at auction and, if so, when.

Crucially, we've done a big part of the plot-hunting job for you: all our plots already have either outline or full planning permission in place, so you won't have to waste your time looking at duds that might never gain consent to build.

What's more, we've sourced the planning reference for you, so that you can quickly and easily identify the current planning consent on the relevant local authority's website. This will arm you with a full understanding of the site's planning history and what's been permitted, so you can gauge whether the plot can support the kind of house you'd like to create.

The following pages are a sample of the plots, renovations and conversion projects available on **PlotBrowser.com** this month.

GOT A PLOT TO SELL?
Head to **PlotBrowser.com** and register as a seller to list your plot for free.

PlotBrowser from BuildIt magazine

START YOUR PLOT SEARCH

To find more plots with planning permission across the UK, and get free notifications of new opportunities based on your personal criteria, sign up today at www.PlotBrowser.com

TYPES OF BUILDING PLOT

New homes can be built on a range of sites and knowing about the opportunities can help you spot land with potential. Here are the key options:

BROWNFIELD SITES

This refers to previously developed land that is or was once occupied by a permanent structure. Government policy supports the provision of new housing in such locations and, on a practical level, services are likely to be in place.

DEMOLISH & REPLACE

A type of brownfield opportunity where you could knock down a building, such as an old bungalow, and construct a new home in its place. It's often more cost-effective than a renovation as VAT can be reclaimed on a new build project.

EDGE-OF-SETTLEMENT

Depending on the maps in the relevant council's Local Plan, this kind of site may or may not fall within existing built-up area boundaries. Generally, policies allow development within this zone, but control it very strictly outside. Any undeveloped land, known as greenfield, will typically only support housing to serve the needs of agriculture, replacement dwellings and some infill.

INFILL PLOTS

Many councils define this as a small gap between an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses. Infilling is usually allowed within settlements' development boundaries, and sometimes outside of these. Gaining consent will be more difficult in zones such as conservation areas.

GARDENS

Contrary to the 'backland development' headlines of a few years ago, planners still allow schemes on garden plots, especially in places that are considered to be built-up. You may even be lucky enough to have a large space that could work as a viable site or know someone who is willing to negotiate a fair price.

SERVICED PLOTS

Land that's ready to build on, with utilities, highway access and potentially other infrastructure already in place, as well as at least outline planning consent. This route offers more certainty over early-stage costs.

ENGLAND

BEDFORDSHIRE

LEIGHTON BUZZARD

Sandy Lane

Building plot with full planning consent granted to create a spacious three-storey home.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Central Bedfordshire Council CB/23/01038/FULL
Contact: Steve Latham & Co 01525 853851 steve@stevelatham.co.uk
Plot ID: 136515

BERKSHIRE

MAIDENHEAD

College Road

Detached house and side garden with planning permission granted for a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 23/00396/FULL
Contact: Waterman Residential 01628 246756 sales@watermanresidential.co.uk
Plot ID: 136554

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

HARDWICK

Lower Road

Plot with consent for change of use from agriculture to residential C3, the demolition of the existing modern agricultural buildings, the erection of two new house, plus the conversion and extension of the traditional outhouse into a residential dwelling.
Guide price: £900,000
Planning: Aylesbury Vale District Council 2/01434/ALB, 23/03332/APP
Contact: Michael Graham 01296 336227 salesa@michaelgraham.co.uk
Plot ID: 136486

LONG CRENDON

Sandy Lane

Plot with consent for five detached dwellings with access and associated works, including the rebuilding of a limestone rubble wall and works to demolish and rebuild a replacement garage for 65 Bicester Road.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: Aylesbury Vale District Council 22/04141/APP
Contact: Aston Mead 01392 956956 mail@astonmead.land
Plot ID: 136481

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CAMBRIDGE

Amwell Road

Plot of land with full planning permission for the construction of three two-bedroom dwellings.
Guide price: £475,000
Planning: Cambridge City Council 22/05472/FUL
Contact: Cheffins 01223 214214 cambridge.residential@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 136507

GREAT ABINGTON

High Street

Plot with consent for the demolition of the existing outbuilding and the erection of a single-storey custom build dwelling in the garden.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: South Cambridgeshire District Council 24/02083/FUL
Contact: Cheffins 01799 523656 saffron-walden@cheffins.co.uk
Plot ID: 136513

WISBECH

Broad Drove

Plot of land with planning consent for the construction of a four-bedroom stone dwelling.
Guide price: £320,000
Planning: Fenland District Council F/YR23/0956/F
Contact: Ashton Roberts 01366 388991 info@ashtonroberts.co.uk
Plot ID: 136534

CORNWALL

CALLESTICK

Ventongimps

Plot with consent for the replacement of the existing two-storey dwelling and attached derelict three-storey mill structure with a new dwelling on the same site, complete with summer house and swimming pool.
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/07906
Contact: Pattinson 0845 146 1591 / 0191 213 0550 gosforth@pattinson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136544

LOOE

Hannafore

Plot of land with full planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £650,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA24/05295
Contact: Private seller paul.bickham@gmail.com
Plot ID: 136565

RELUBBUS

Relubbus House

A single plot with planning consent for the construction of a two-storey four-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £160,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA22/10093
Contact: Marshalls 01736 360203 feedback@marshallspz.co.uk
Plot ID: 136475

ROSELAND PENINSULA

Daddiport

Land with planning permission in place for a detached house and garage on a level plot.
Guide price: £105,000
Planning: Cornwall Council PA20/04221
Contact: Philip Martin 01872 242244 sales@philip-martin.co.uk
Plot ID: 136558

COUNTY DURHAM

BISHOP AUCKLAND

Woodland

Plot with planning permission for the construction of a single dwelling.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

YAXLEY

Askews Lane

Plot of land with detailed planning permission for the construction of a detached three-bedroom dwelling of nearly 167m².
Guide price: £275,000
Planning: Huntingdon District Council 22/01422/FUL
Contact: Pelham James 01572 497070 team@pelhamjames.co.uk
Plot ID 136413

Guide price: £85,000
Planning: Durham County Council DL13 5RH
Contact: Pattinson Commercial 0845 146 1586 / 0191 239 3252 commercial@pattinson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136500

HORDEN
Second Street
A plot of land with planning permission for the construction of four residential dwellings.
Guide price: £93,000
Planning: Durham County Council 5/PL/2013/0073
Contact: Let Property 0141 376 3809 hello@letproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136482

CUMBRIA

LITTLE ORTON
The Gables
Plot of 0.325 acres with full consent granted for a four-bedroom detached home with a south-facing garden.
Guide price: £175,000
Planning: Carlisle City Council 23/0143
Contact: P F K - Land Agency 01768 866611 carlisle@pfk.co.uk
Plot ID: 136270

DERBYSHIRE

BELPER
Valley View
Plot with consent for a two-bedroom detached bungalow in a popular area.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: Amber Valley Borough Council Ava/2022/0562
Contact: Home 2 Sell Ltd 01773 823200 enquiries@home2selluk.com
Plot ID: 136490

CRICH
Plot off Cromford Road
Land with outline planning permission for a detached single-storey dwelling.
Guide price: £135,000
Planning: Amber Valley Borough Council AVA/2024/0152
Contact: Bagshaws 01335 342201 ashbourne@bagshaws.com
Plot ID: 136469

ILKESTON
Manners Road
Plot with planning permission in place for a pair of detached houses.
Guide price: £250,000
Planning: Erewash Borough Council ere/023/0046
Contact: Robert Ellis 0115 949 0044 stapleford@robertellis.co.uk
Plot ID: 136529

DEVON

PLYMOUTH
Brixton
A plot with planning consent a four- or five-bedroom home.
Guide price: £325,000
Planning: South Hams District Council 4369/22/arm
Contact: Millington Tunnicliff 01752 896020 info@millingtontunnicliff.co.uk
Plot ID: 136545

DORSET

BUCKLAND NEWTON
Major Common
Plot of land with planning permission for the erection of three properties.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: West Dorset District Council P/PIP/2023/07330
Planning: Rolfe East 01935 814929 sherborne@rolfe-east.com
Plot ID: 136542

GILLINGHAM
Bourton
Plot with consent for two three-storey, four-bedroom houses of 152m², one four-storey, four-bedroom house of 220m², and a four-storey four-bedroom house of 205m².
Guide price: £375,000
Planning: North Dorset District Council 2/2019/1529/ful
Planning: Symonds & Sampson 01258 473766 sturminster@symondsandsampson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136478

ESSEX

CRESSING
Braintree Road
A plot with full planning permission granted for the construction of a four- to five-bedroom, detached dwelling.
Guide price: £355,000
Planning: Braintree District Council 22/00720/ful
Contact: Michaels Property Consultants 01376 337400 braintree@michaelsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136533

DUNMOW
Chelmsford Road
Single plot of land with planning permission granted for a detached, three-bedroom, single-storey home with garage, off-street parking to the front and private garden.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Uttlesford District Council UTT/24/0800/FUL
Contact: Fine & Country 01279 757500 paula@fineandcountry.com
Plot ID: 13646

SAFFRON WALDEN
Little Chesterford
Land with outline consent for the erection of a two-bedroom detached property with parking and garden.
Guide price: £160,000
Planning: Uttlesford District Council UTT/22/3321/OP
Contact: James & Co 01371 876678 info@jamesandco.net
Plot ID: 136470

WICKHAM BISHOPS
Witham Road
Plot of land comprising a five-bedroom bungalow and planning permission for the construction of an additional three-bedroom bungalow.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: Maldon District Council 24/00545/FUL
Contact: Beresfords - Land and New Homes 01245 447938 land@beresfords.co.uk
Plot ID: 136572

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

NAILSWORTH
Old Bristol Road
Plot of land with outline planning permission in place for the construction of a single self build dwelling with all matters reserved for future consideration.

COUNTY DURHAM

DARLINGTON
Summerhouse
Two buildings with planning permission for conversion into a two-storey four-bedroom house and a single-storey two-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £725,000
Planning: Darlington Borough Council 24/00972/LBC
Contact: GSC Grays 01833 637000 barnardcastle@gscgrays.co.uk
Plot ID 136561

WHAT MAKES A GOOD PLOT?

The perfect piece of land would be in a pleasant area, affordable and level, with easy access, good ground conditions and no planning issues or obstructions. The issue, of course, is that plot may not exist. Even the best sites require some compromise, so it's crucial to properly assess contenders to get as close as possible to your goals.

All the plots in our listings come with planning permission: either outline (a loose affirmation the site can be developed) or full (consent for a particular design). Beware of any site without current approval. Land is worth considerably more once consent has been granted, so if the deal looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Once you've spotted an opportunity, consider whether the type of house you want can be comfortably accommodated on the plot, and if the existing consent allows for it or could be amended to suit. If it's a yes to both, then the site is worth a bit more research.

Check for issues on the plot that could increase construction costs, make it difficult to get the right design for your needs, or affect the viability of a project. Some of the most notorious budget-busters include steep slopes, difficult access to services, or obstacles like overhead cables. Most issues are not insurmountable and, with good design, some can even be turned to your advantage.

From a planning perspective, check how long is left on the consent. If it is less than six months and you will need to redesign the house to suit your needs or sort out any planning conditions, this could be problematic.

If early investigations seem positive, then you can move on to a more in-depth appraisal of how suitable the site is. Consider access, ground conditions, drainage and legal matters. If you are unsure, seek professional advice. This might mean speaking to your local council. Our useful online resource **www.self-build.co.uk/plot-checklist** can help bring structure to this part of the assessment process.

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ROADSIDE BARN FOR DEVELOPMENT

LOCATION Nether Hesleden, Skipton, West Yorkshire

GUIDE PRICE £85,000

AREA 0.63 acres

PLANNING Yorkshire Dales National Park C/35/40

CONTACT GSC Grays Farm Agent 01748 329907 colburn@gscgrays.co.uk

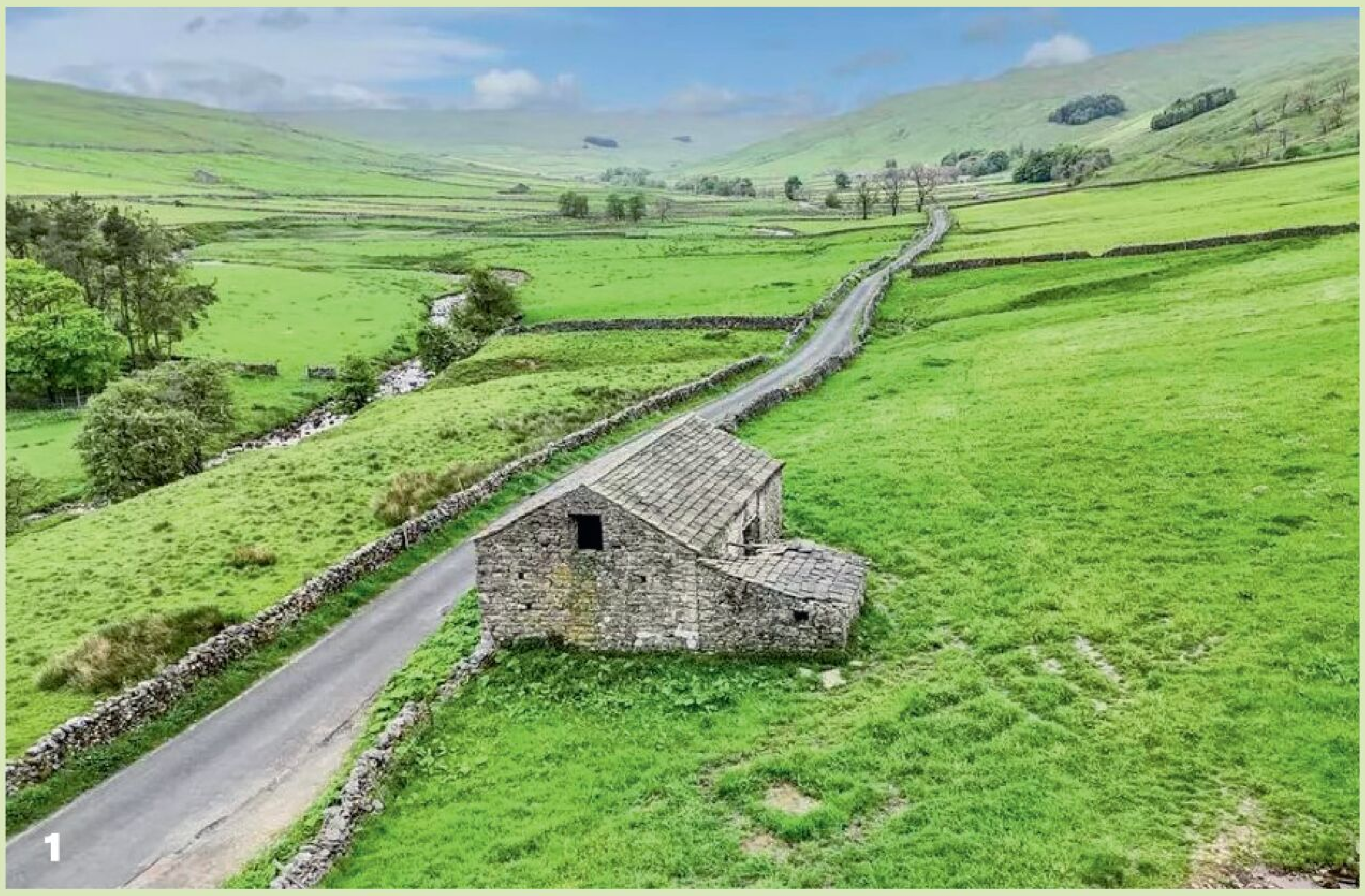
Plot ID 136451

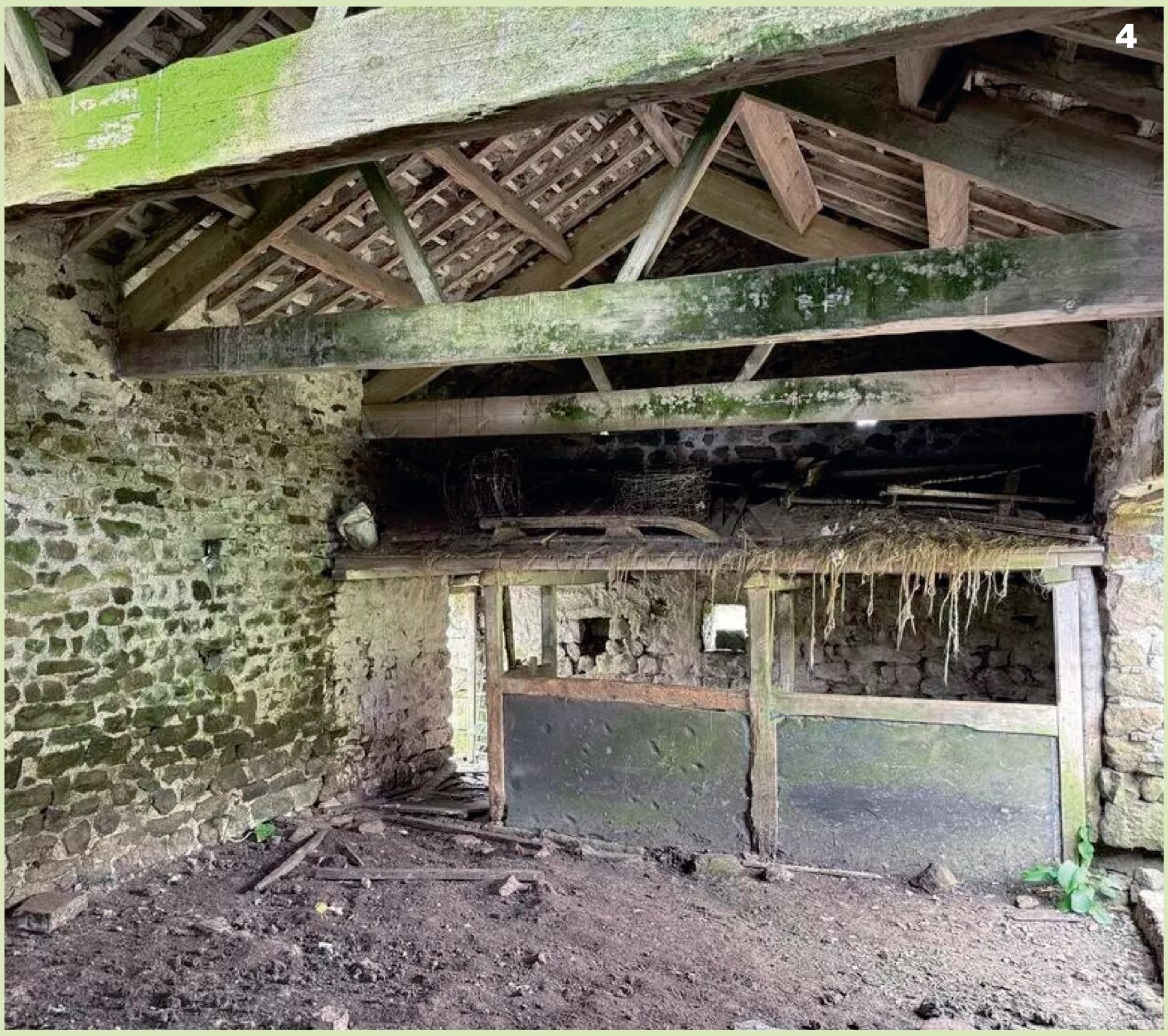
Set in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, this roadside barn comes with consent for residential development.

Extending to around 74m², the attractive stone barn is in a picturesque setting with far-reaching views over open countryside. Planning permission has been approved for its conversion into a two-bedroom local occupancy home or, alternatively, a holiday let.

The single-storey barn boasts several charming, original features, offering a great opportunity for the purchaser to create a bespoke, off-grid development. The barn also comes with a large grass paddock of around 0.63 acres.

Nether Hesleden is a hamlet near to the village of Litton in the Yorkshire Dales. Although rural in nature, it benefits from direct access to the highway, and would be a perfect fit for anyone with a love of the outdoors and open countryside.





1 The barn's proximity to the road means easy access to the local area

2 The finished home would enjoy stunning panoramic views over open countryside

3 Set in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the barn would provide a peaceful way of life for the purchaser

4 The attractive barn is around 74m², set over a single storey

5 Original features could be retained

KENT

MARDEN
Lodge Farm
Agricultural barn with planning consent for the demolition and erection of a four-bedroom chalet bungalow with associated access, landscaping and biodiversity enhancement.
Guide price: over £450,000
Planning: Maidstone Borough Council 24/500504/FULL
Contact: Savills 01580 720161 cranbrook@savills.com
Plot ID 136566

Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Stroud District Council S.24/0817/OUT
Contact: Perry Bishop and Chambers 01453 836736 nailsworth@perrybishop.co.uk
Plot ID: 136509

HERTFORDSHIRE

GOFFS OAK
Plot 1 Alessandra Grove
One of six serviced plots available, plot one is positioned at the end of a private road. The site measures 887m² and comes with planning permission to design a bespoke, four-bedroom detached 1.5-storey home of around 260m² with garage.
Guide price: £870,000
Planning: Borough of Broxbourne 07/24/0035/RM
Contact: Custom Build Homes 0345 223 4452 marketing@custombuildhomes.co.uk
Plot ID: 136521

ISLE OF MAN

THE HOPE
Wayside Hope Cottage
Two Manx cottages with permission for the erection of a two-storey rear extension and a single-storey sunroom to each property.
Guide price: £298,000
Planning: Planning and Building Control Isle of Man 22/01519/B
Contact: Harmony Homes 020 8033 4528 douglas@harmonyhomes.co.im
Plot ID: 136483

LANCASHIRE

BANKS, SOUTHPORT
Charnleys Lane
Plot with planning permission for development secured with a lawful start in a lovely semi-rural location.
Guide price: £125,000
Planning: West Lancashire Borough Council 2020/0843/FUL
Contact: Private seller 07557 051319 angelacubbon@gmail.com
Plot ID: 136464

COLNE
Lenches Road
Plot of land with planning permission for a three-bedroom detached house to be constructed of natural stone with a blue slate roof.
Guide price: £120,000
Planning: Pendle Borough Council 21/0581/cnd, 18/0544/ful, 21/0582/var
Contact: John Pallister 01200 425697 info@pallisters.co.uk
Plot ID: 136474

LEICESTERSHIRE

RAVENSTONE
Ashby Road
Three plots of land, each with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom house per plot.
Guide price: £425,000
Planning: North West Leicestershire District Council 22/00821/FUL
Contact: Sinclair Estate Agents 01530 838338 debbie@sinclairestateagents.co.uk
Plot ID: 136550

LINCOLNSHIRE

NETTLEHAM
Washdyke Lane
Large detached property with a self contained annexe and a private driveway. The building plot to the rear has full planning permission in place for the construction of three detached residential dwellings.
Guide price: £1,300,000
Planning: West Lindsey District Council WL/2024/00779
Contact: West Lindsey District Council WL/2024/00779
Plot ID: 136485

SWINSTEAD
Macham Close
Plot of land with planning permission for the part conversion of the existing barn linked to a newly-built extension to provide three bedrooms.
Guide price: £225,000
Planning: South Kesteven District Council S22/2368
Contact: Richardson 01780 762433 post@richardsonsurveyors.co.uk
Plot ID: 136552

NORFOLK

LUDHAM
Horsefen Road
Single plot with planning consent for the conversion and extension of the barn with associated external alterations to form a single dwelling.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Broads Authority PF/23/0587 North Norfolk District Council
Contact: Private seller allenplayfair@hotmail.co.uk
Plot ID: 136541

WISBECH
Ramnoth Road
A plot with consent for a one-bedroom dwelling with off-road parking and an enclosed garden.
Guide price: £60,000
Planning: Fenland District Council F/YR23/1067/F
Contact: Aspire Homes 01945 408007 info@aspire-homes.com
Plot ID: 136473

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ALDBOROUGH
Pipits Meadow
A plot with planning permission for a three-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £295,000
Planning: North Norfolk District Council PO/17/0849
Contact: Arnolds Keys 01263 738444 aylsham@arnoldskeys.com
Plot ID: 136496

NORTHUMBERLAND

SPITTAL
Main Street
Plot with consentto convert a former showroom into two detached homes.
Guide price: £450,000
Planning: Northumberland County Council 21/01150/ ful
Contact: Edwin Thompson 01896 751300 galashiels@edwin-thompson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136530

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

RAVENSHEAD
Main Road
Plot of land for development with a shared drive and off-road parking.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Gedling Borough Council 2022/0296
Contact: Buckley Brown Estate Agents 01623 633633 mansfield@buckleybrown.co.uk
Plot ID: 136562

OXFORDSHIRE

GOSFORD
Bicester Road
Plot of land with planning consent for the construction of a four-bedroom, detached home.
Guide price: £400,000
Planning: Cherwell District Council 18/00725/F
Contact: Alistair Redhouse Property Partners 01865 364541 hello@aredhouse.co.uk
Plot ID: 136520

LINCOLNSHIRE

LEA
Lansdall Avenue
A single building plot available with full planning permission in place for the construction of a dormer bungalow.
Guide price: £112,500
Planning: West Lindsey District Council 141713
Contact: Hunters 01427 616118 gainsborough@hunters.com
Plot ID: 136560

OXFORDSHIRE

CHACOMBE
Banbury Road
Plot of land with outline planning permission with all matters reserved for a new detached dwelling.
Guide price: £225,000
Planning: West Northamptonshire Council 2024/0002/out
Contact: Hamptons International 01295 275885 banburylettings@hamptons-int.com
Plot ID: 136547

SYDENHAM
Land adj. Park House
Plot with approved planning permission for a detached two-storey four-bedroom home of 186m^2.
Guide price: £595,000
Planning: South Oxfordshire District Council P21/S3405/O
Contact: Colombs Estate Agents 01844 214421 thame@colombs.co.uk
Plot ID: 136573

SOMERSET

BANWELL
The Ship Hotel
Full planning permission granted for two homes; one four-bedroom and one five-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £230,000
Planning: North Somerset Council 23/P/2587/FUL
Contact: Cooper & Tanner 01373 455060 / 01373 455100 development@cooperandtanner.co.uk
Plot ID: 136543

BRISTOL
Dunbridge Lane
Plot of land with planning permission granted for the construction of a two-bedroom, attached dwelling.
Guide price: £110,000
Planning: Bristol City Council 22/05011/F
Contact: Your Move 0117 444 5207 keynsham@your-move.co.uk
Plot ID: 136559

TAUNTON
92a Quantock Road
A single plot at the end of a quiet road with outline planning consent for a three-bedroom, two-storey detached house with parking for two cars.
Guide price: £80,000
Planning: Somerset Council - Somerset West & Taunton area (Taunton Deane) 38/20/0046
Contact: Private seller 07411 891796 jademignon@msn.com
Plot ID: 136463

SUFFOLK

EDWARDSTONE
Round Maple
One of two adjacent plots in a rural hamlet setting. Full consent in place for a three-bedroom detached house with a double cartlodge.
Guide price: £226,500
Planning: Babergh District Council DC/18/03944
Contact: Private seller 07763 768866 philipbmilsom@gmail.com
Plot ID: 136549

HOLBROOK
Ipswich Road
Plot of land with planning permission for tthree residential dwellings and two additional chalet-style homes.
Guide price: £350,000
Planning: Babergh District Council DC/22/05076
Contact: Michaels Property Consultants 01206 576999 sales@michaelsproperty.co.uk
Plot ID: 136537

WICKHAM MARKET
Spring Lane
Riverside building plot of approx 0.9 acres with consent for a striking contemporary home.
Guide price: £800,000
Planning: East Suffolk Council DC/24/0816/FUL
Contact: Savills 01473 234800 alexander.mcnab@savills.com
Plot ID: 136476

SURREY

WALTON-ON-THAMES
Silverdale Avenue
Plot with full consent granted for a pair of two-storey semi-detached homes with rooms in the roof space.
Guide price: £1,500,000
Planning: Babergh District Council DC/24/02083
Contact: Elmbridge Borough Council 2024/0721
Plot ID: 136468

WEST YORKSHIRE

EAST MORTON
Cliff Farm
Plot of land with planning permission for the demolition of the existing barn and the construction of a four-bedroom residential dwelling.
Guide price: £285,000
Planning: Bradford Metropolitan District Council 24/03055/PAR
Contact: Hunters 01756 700544 skipton@hunters.com
Plot ID: 136505

HONLEY
Far End Lane
A single building plot with consent granted for the erection of a unique residential dwelling.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Kirklees Council 2024/62/91909/W
Contact: Belong by James Smith 01484 444567 info@wherewebelong.co.uk
Plot ID: 136519

NETHERTON
Balk Lane
Land with consent for the demolition of the existing stables and erection of a single residential dwelling.
Guide price: £200,000
Planning: Wakefield Metropolitan District Council 22/02407/FUL
Contact: Holroyd Miller 01924 299494 info@holroydmiller.co.uk
Plot ID: 136555

WAKEFIELD
School Lane
Building plot with planning permission for a two- to three-bedroom, two-storey detached bungalow.
Guide price: £135,000
Planning: Wakefield Metropolitan District Council 24/00329/FUL
Contact: Richard Kendall 01924 291294 mail@richardkendall.co.uk
Plot ID: 136511

WILTSHIRE

BRADFORD-ON-AVON
Monkton Farleigh
Land with planning consent for a two-storey, four-bedroom dwelling.
Guide price: £425,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council PL/2023/06979
Contact: Davies & Davies 01225 867555 bona@daviesanddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 136497

WILTSHIRE

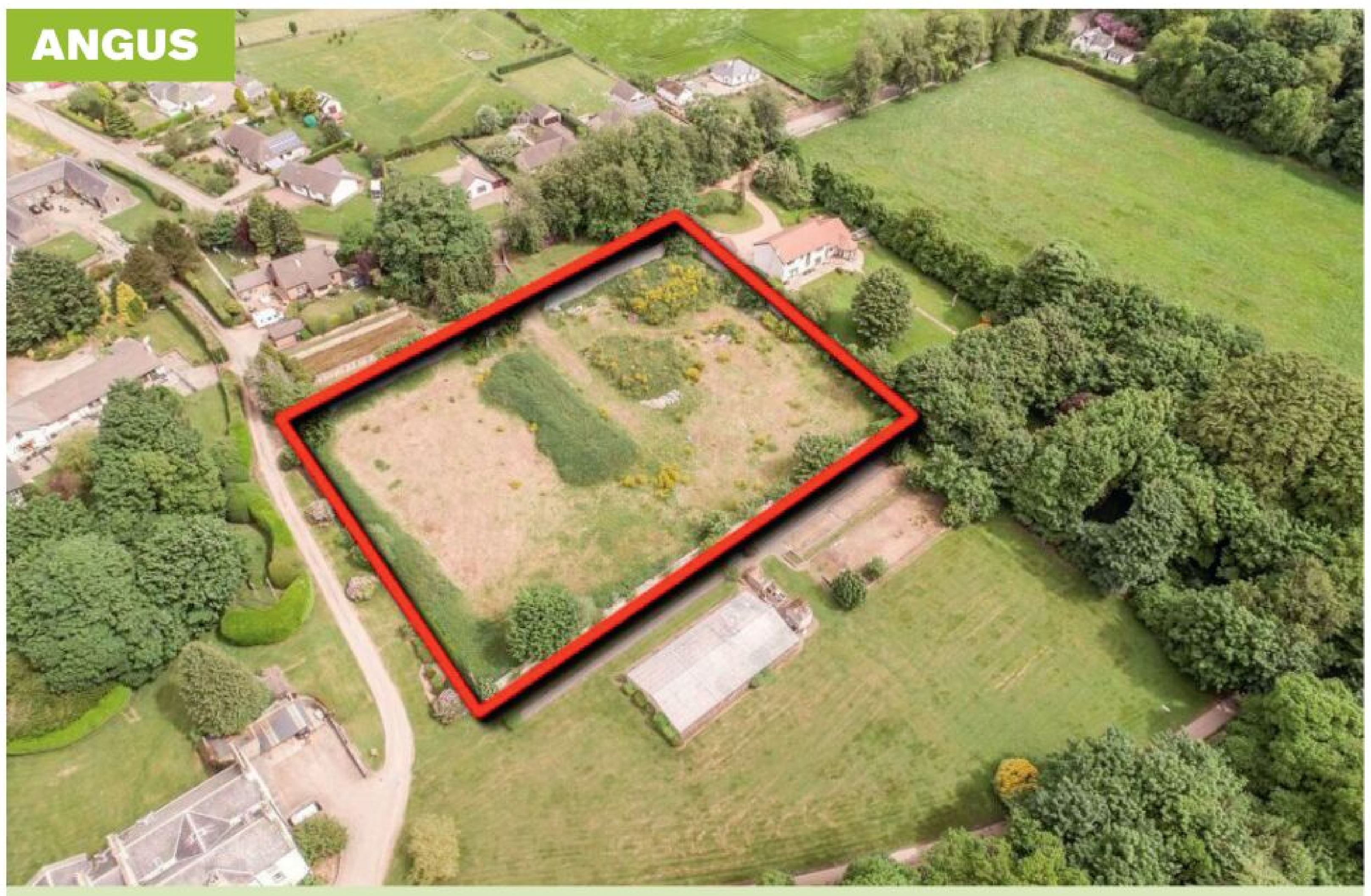
PROMOTED PLOT

WESTBURY
Plot for three detached five-bedroom sustainable homes with flexible accommodation and an annexe for multi-generational living. Full planning permission was granted in April 2024, and includes a garage, garden and generous off-street parking, with options for home working and domestic business use. Total site area is 0.17 hectares. Buyer to discharge planning conditions.
Offers over: £700,000
Planning: Wiltshire County Council PL/2023/08411

55a
57
61
61a
Depot

Contact: 01373 822801 libby@ied.org.uk
Plot ID: 136263

ANGUS



TEALING
The Walled Garden
Plot of land with conditional planning permission for the development of six residential dwellings.
Guide price: £295,000
Planning: Angus Council 18/00689/Full
Contact: Future Property Auctions 0345 646 1117 glasgow@futurepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136551

PEWSHAM
Forest Lane
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of six detached dwellings in a variety of sizes.
Guide price: £1,000,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council 17/05672/Ful, 19/06116/Ful
Contact: Atwell Martin 01249 447777 chippenham@atwellmartin.co.uk
Plot ID: 136466

SALISBURY
Great Durnford
Plot of land with permission for the demolition of the existing building and the conversion of a detached home, hard and soft landscaping and associated works.
Guide price: £550,000
Planning: Wiltshire Council pl/2023/08703
Contact: Symonds & Sampson 01722 336944 salisbury@symondsandsampson.co.uk
Plot ID: 136467

SCOTLAND

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

LOCKERBIE
Livingstone Place
Plot with planning consent in place for a three-bedroom detached house.
Guide price: £50,000
Planning: Dumfries and Galloway Council 24/1783/ful
Contact: Yopa 01322 584475 hello@yopa.co.uk
Plot ID: 136518

FIFE

KINGLASSIE
Main Street
Plot with consent for a substantial 1.5-storey detached property with a floor area of approx 153m^2.
Guide price: £35,000
Planning: Fife Council 21/02211/FULL
Contact: Auction House Scotland 0141 339 4466 info@auctionhousescotland.com
Plot ID: 136501

HIGHLAND

LEACHKIN, INVERNESS
Land near The Croft House, 8 Leachkin Brae
A tranquil 0.5-acre plot with breathtaking panoramic views. Outline consent is in place for a residential dwelling and stable block. The current owner holds the adjoining land and is open to selling.
Guide price: £280,000
Planning: Highland Council 23/04208/PIP
Contact: McEwan Fraser Legal 0131 524 9797 mandy.taylor@mcewanfraserlegal.co.uk
Plot ID: 136510

DINGWALL
Balblair
Plot of land with outline planning permission granted for a three-bedroom, one- or two-storey detached house with garage.
Guide price: £85,000
Planning: Highland Council 21/05250/ful
Contact: The Agency UK 020 8128 0617 enquiries@theagencyuk.com
Plot ID: 136471

SUTHERLAND
Plots 3 & 4, Croft Pedde Ct
Two plots of land, each with planning permission in place for the construction of a residential dwelling.
Guide price: £92,500
Planning: Highland Council 22/01452/FUL
Contact: Mackenzie & Cormack 01862 892046 mail@tainlaw.co.uk
Plot ID: 136493

WEST LOTHIAN

BROXBURN
Plot 1 Station Road
Plot of land with planning permission for the construction of a four-bedroom detached dwelling.
Guide price: £97,000
Planning: West Lothian Council LIVE/0294/FUL/17
Contact: Future Property Auctions - Glasgow 0345 646 1117 info@futurepropertyauctions.co.uk
Plot ID: 136593

WALES

CARMARTHENSHIRE

AMMANFORD
Pentwyn Road
A single plot of land with outline planning permission granted for the construction of a single dwelling.
Guide price: £95,000
Planning: Carmarthenshire County Council pl/06612
Contact: Clee Tompkinson Francis 01269 591884 ammanford@ctf-uk.com
Plot ID: 136517

CEREDIGION

ABERAERON
Bro Allt Y Graig
A single plot with planning permission in place for the construction of a large, five-bedroom detached property.
Guide price: £335,000
Planning: Ceredigion County Council A220884
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01545 571600 aberaeron@morgananddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 136539

ABERAERON
Panteg Road
Single building plot with planning permission granted for the construction of a two-bedroom detached cottage.
Guide price: £158,000
Planning: Ceredigion County Council A200287
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01545 571600 aberaeron@morgananddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 136540

LLANDYSUL
Rhydlewis
A single plot with detailed consent for a detached three-bedroom home with footings installed.
Guide price: £190,000
Planning: Ceredigion County Council A180831
Contact: Morgan & Davies 01545 571600 aberaeron@morgananddavies.co.uk
Plot ID: 136536

CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH

LLANDDULAS, ABERGELE
Parc Llindir
A single building plot with consent in place for a detached five-bedroom home boasting panoramic views of both the coastline and the surrounding countryside.
Guide price: £295,000
Planning: Conwy County Borough Council 0/50341
Contact: Private seller adc@hotmail.co.uk
Plot ID: 136504

ASK AN EXPERT AT BUILD IT LIVE

Want more plot finding advice? Join us at Build It Live for our annual exhibitions in Kent, Bicester and Exeter.

Talk to the experts
Our planning experts Julia Riddle and Martin Gaine will be on hand all weekend to answer your questions and help make that first stage of your project a little easier to digest.

Attend our seminar: How to find land and getting planning permission
Whether it's a new build, renovation or extension, creating your dream home starts with obtaining planning consent. Our plot and planning specialist guides you through the essential elements, including submitting your application, and offers invaluable advice on finding the right plot of land.

Visit the LAND ZONE brought to you by PlotBrowser.com
Check out our gallery of current available plots in the region, plus the latest serviced plot projects across the UK. Discover everything you need to know about finding the right plot for your project.

Find out more and book your tickets: **www.builditlive.co.uk**

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Most self builders lack experience and hence are likely to make mistakes and stumble into project potholes. Research and knowledge is key. Build It's Self Build Virtual Training will give you the detailed know-how to successfully realise your dream home on time and on budget.

This interactive series of courses are presented by Build It's expert contributors. Each course is designed to give you the key nuggets of knowledge you need - in a friendly, succinct and accessible package all from the convenience of your own home.

From finding land to design, from sustainability to completing your project on budget, there is a course for each stage of the self build process.

Stats based on delegate feedback of recent courses

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For more information visit **www.buildit.co.uk/training** and use code **BUILD** to gain an introductory discount

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In Focus

Build It Live

Every month, we round up some of the UK's best products and suppliers for self builders and home renovators. Over the next few pages, we put the spotlight on what's in store at Build It Live South East on 22nd & 23rd Feb

When it comes to specifying your self build, extension or home renovation project, you want to be confident that you're choosing the best materials and suppliers to match your goals and budget. And we're here to help! A trip to your nearest Build It Live show is a fantastic place to start, giving you instant access to 1,000s of high-quality products, 100s of knowledgeable suppliers and our very own magazine experts. Our next show, Build It Live South East, opens its doors on 22nd & 23rd February.

Source quality products & services

From structural materials through to eco insulations, sliding doors, smart home tech and more, there's nothing quite like seeing and experiencing a product in person to understand whether it's the right fit for you.

At Build It Live, you'll see a huge range of options first-hand – and in many cases you can interact with them much like you would in a showroom. Open and close windows; slide glazed doors along their tracks; feel the quality of handmade bricks, timber claddings and other external finishes; see the latest heat pump solutions; and gain a deep insight into all the components that will go into your completed bespoke home.

Crucially, you'll get to do all of that while benefitting from the guiding hand of expert suppliers. How many opportunities do you get to speak to multiple timber frame, glazing, heating, insulation, airtightness, kitchen, staircase and flooring (the list goes on!) specialists all under one roof? At Build It Live, you can not only compare and contrast the product options, but also meet the partners you'll be working with on what's likely to be the biggest and most personal project you'll ever undertake.

These are experts in their fields and, importantly, they've worked on countless home building projects. So they've been there, done it and got the T-shirt! That means you can expect tried-and-trusted advice from experienced professionals, running the whole gamut from architects to house manufacturers, warranty providers, energy specialists, roofers, lighting suppliers and more!

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22nd & 23rd February 2025
at **Kent Event Centre**

See page 98 to claim your 2 FREE TICKETS or find out more at www.builditlive.co.uk

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When you invest time, effort and money into making your dream home a reality, you should protect it from day one. At Self-Build Zone, we've been insuring self-builds, renovations, conversions, extensions and more since 2002. We understand the hard work you put in, so our market-leading and award-winning cover is built to meet your needs.

Site Insurance protects you throughout construction – including any existing structures, employees, traders, theft, public liability and more – for all types of build, and periods of cover from three months to twenty four. If you're starting from scratch, our 10 year Structural Warranty is approved by the majority of mortgage lenders in the UK and backed by 'A' Rated insurers, so you have the confidence you can sell. Get a quote online or call us today.

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Norrsken Alu-Clad windows shine in this RIBA Yorkshire award-winning Passive House

Sort Trae, an arresting Yorkshire passive house with charred timber cladding and panoramic Norrsken glazing has won the coveted RIBA Yorkshire Award for 2024. With U-values as low as 0.64, Norrsken's Aluminium Clad Timber windows and doors illuminate Passive Houses across the country. "Amazing windows that I can recommend to anyone looking for high performance, quality and style… My clients love them."
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Relying on your contractor's public liability alone is a false security. Some of the largest claims we have paid have protected customers in situations where a trade caused damage but wasn't correctly insured. The costs involved in a loss will invariably exceed any contingency fund you may have. Arranging the correct cover with an 'A' rated insurer is the simplest way to risk managing that situation and is crucial to you securing financial certainty for your completed build cost.

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ASK OUR EXPERTS

Swap brochures and web browsers for the chance to see products first-hand at Build It Live South East on 22nd & 23rd February at Kent Event Centre, Maidstone – it's your opportunity to conveniently compare so many products and services in one go. Chat directly with over 100 of the UK's leading suppliers and find out everything you need to know about their products and services to make sure you find the right things for your project. It's your best route to talk with a wide range of companies all in one weekend!

Plus, whether you're a dab hand or a newcomer to the world of bespoke home building, there's one key ingredient you'll need when it comes to completing your dream home on time and on budget: high-quality expert advice. Whatever your self build, extension or renovation question, talk to Build It's experts in the Ask Our Experts lounge. Providing free, independent and bespoke advice, this unique opportunity is worth £100s so is not to be missed!

Secure your FREE tickets today worth £24!

Visit www.builditlive.co.uk and use offer code MAG25.

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MAKE SURE YOU LOOK OUT FOR THESE NACSBA STAMPS

The National Custom & Self Build Association campaigns to remove the barriers to more people in the UK building their own home. Look out for the NaCSBA stamp and be assured that you'll be working with a company you can trust.

- **All members are committed to working with self- builders in a fair and transparent manner**
- **All members are funding the growth of the sector so more people can have an individual home**
- **All members are covered by NaCSBA's consumer Code of Practice – to protect you if things go wrong**

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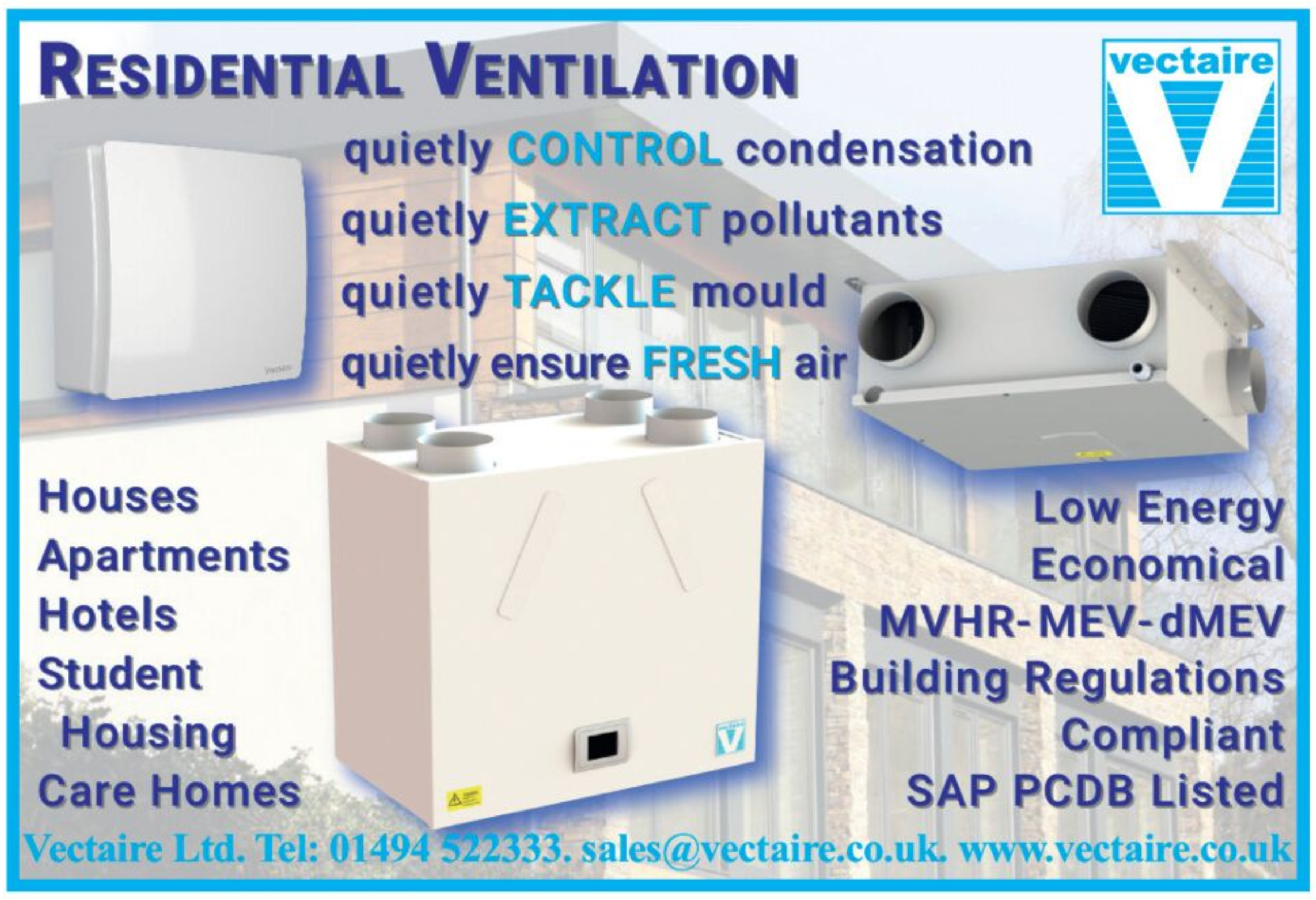

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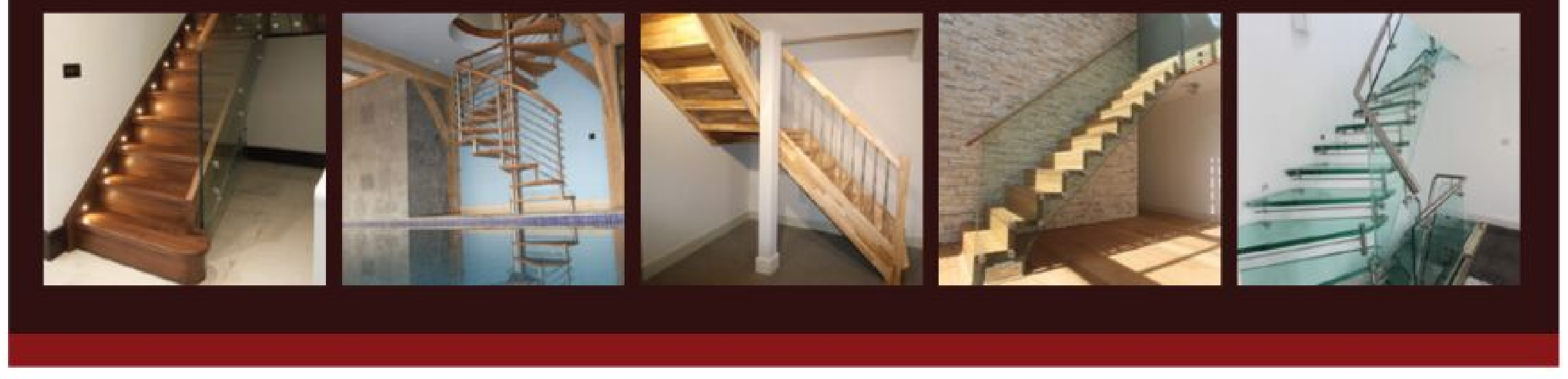

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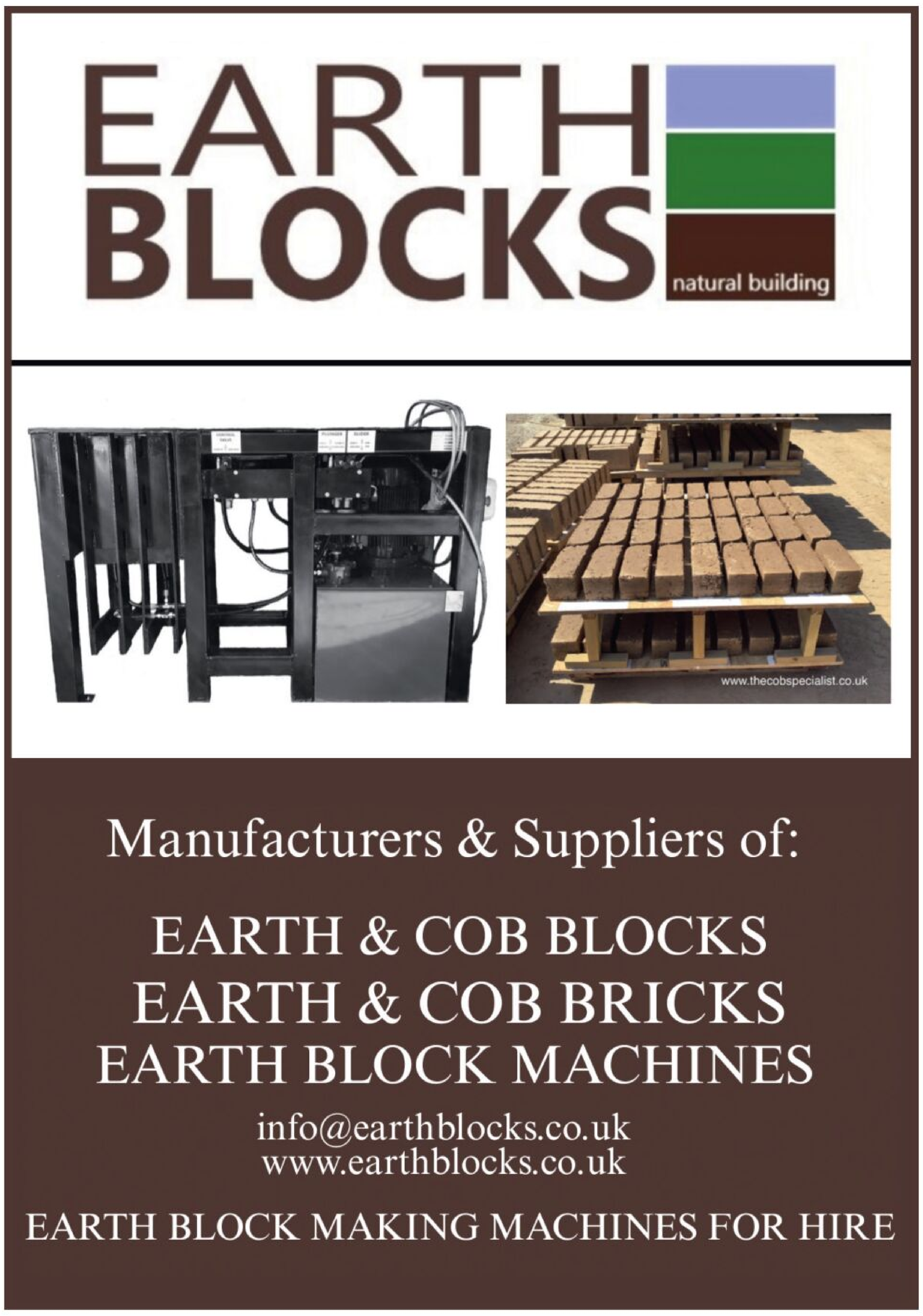

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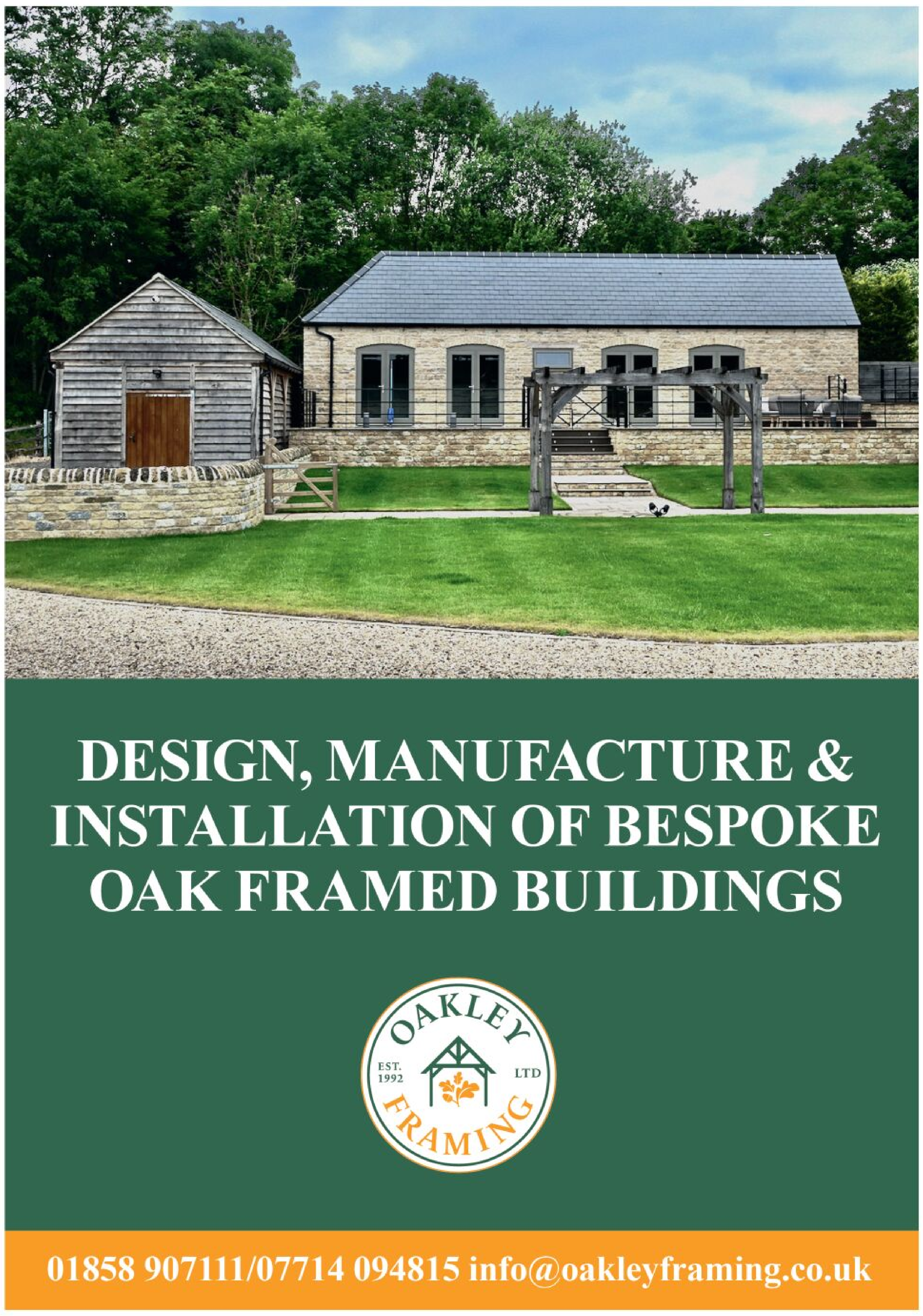

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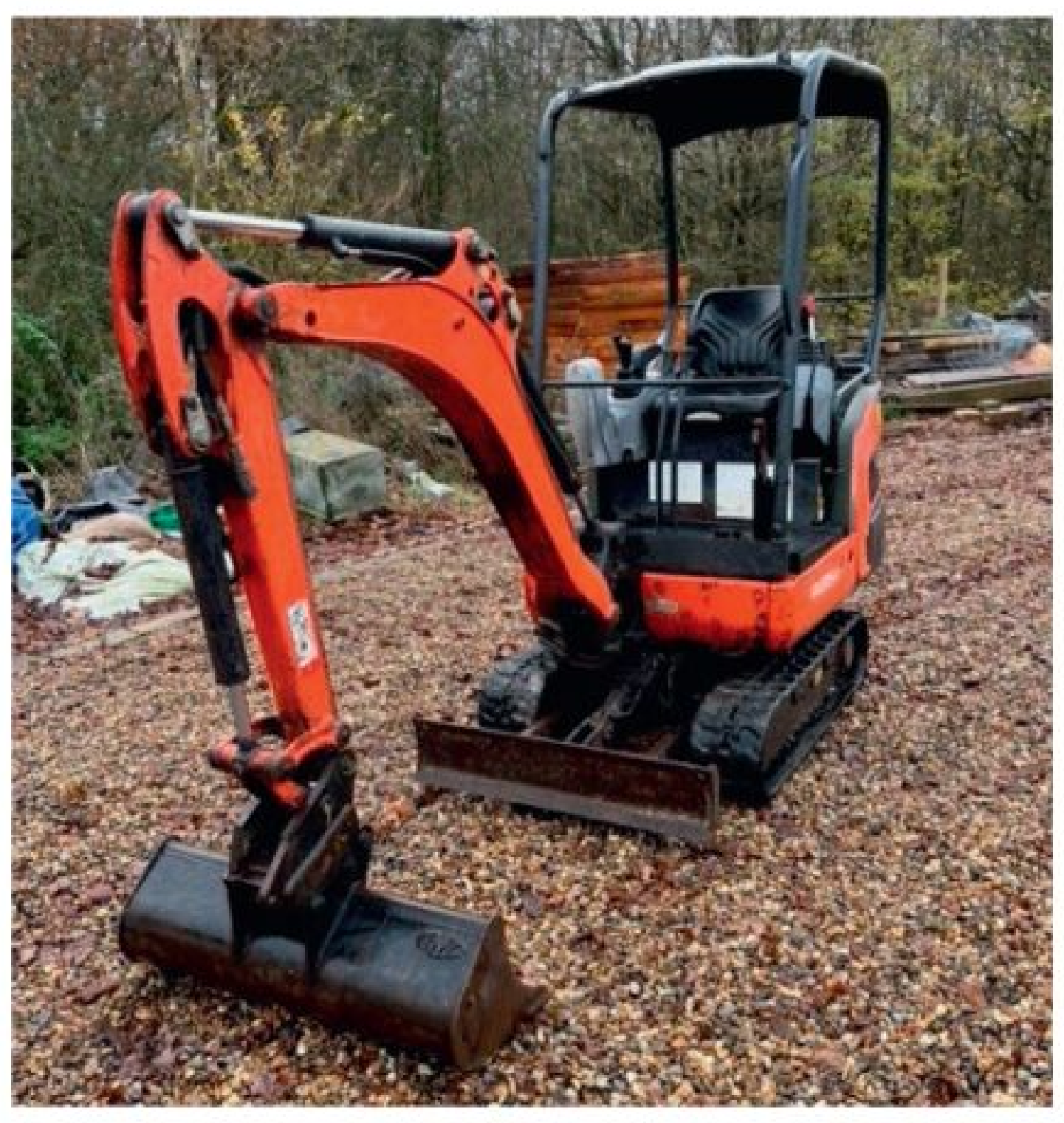

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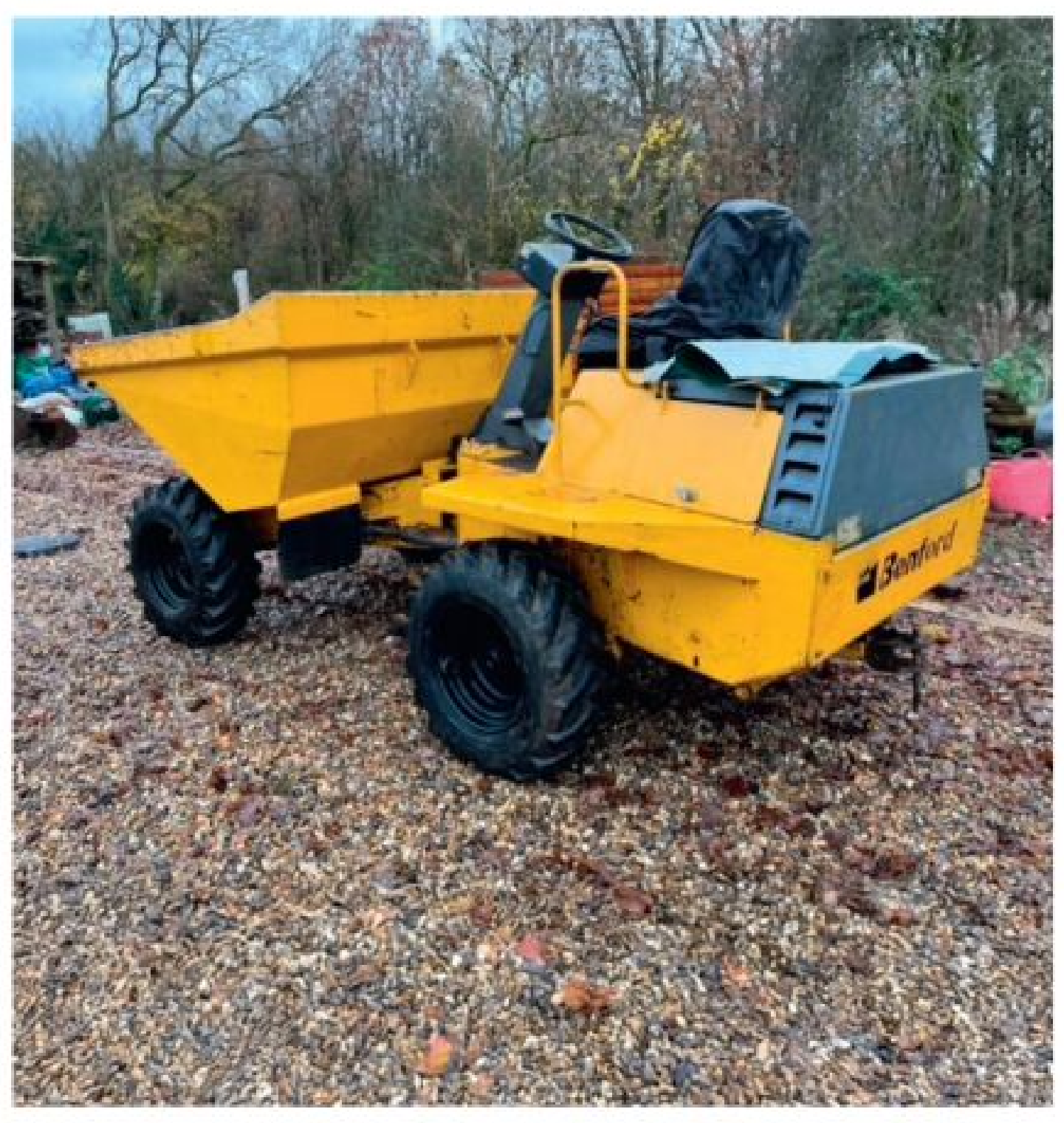

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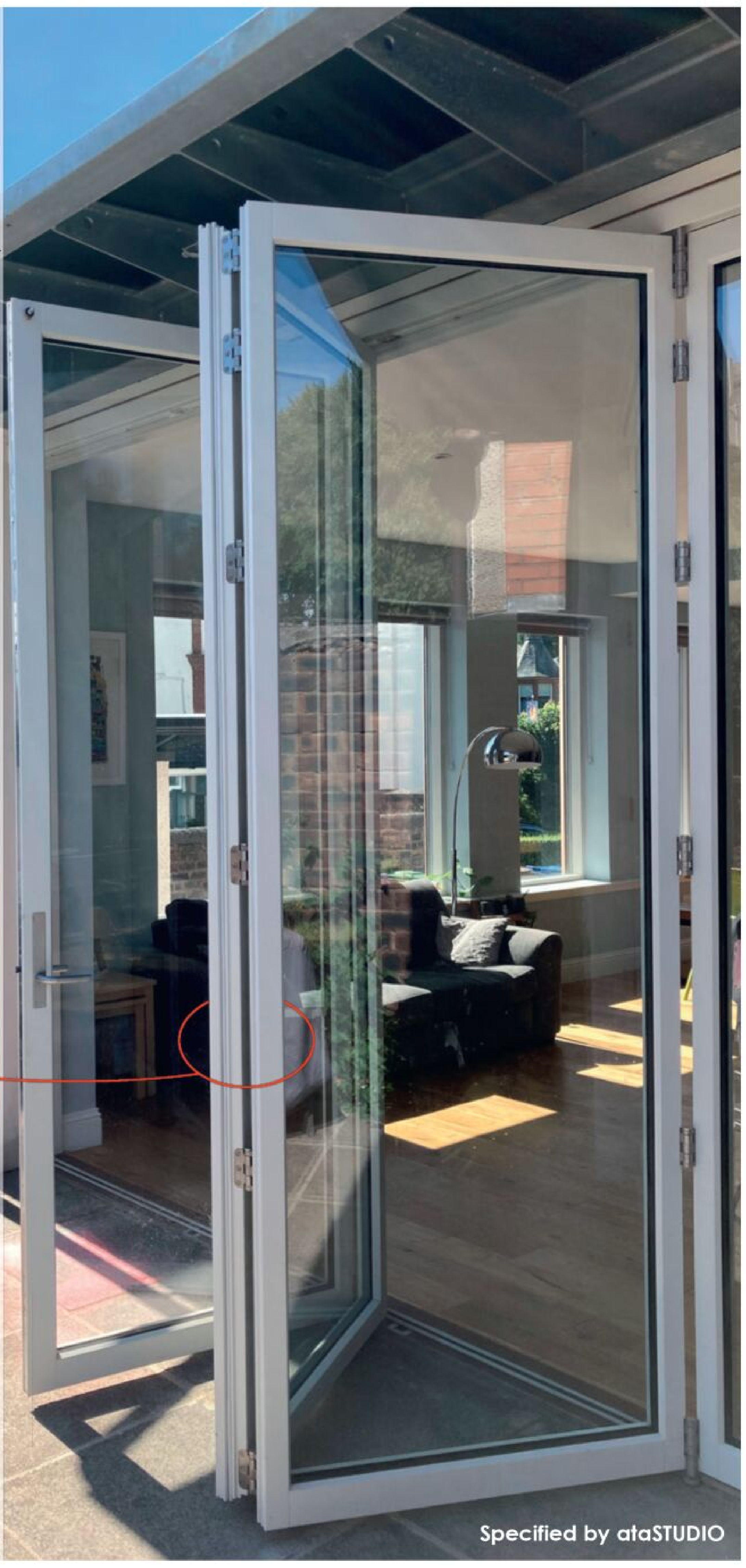

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next month...

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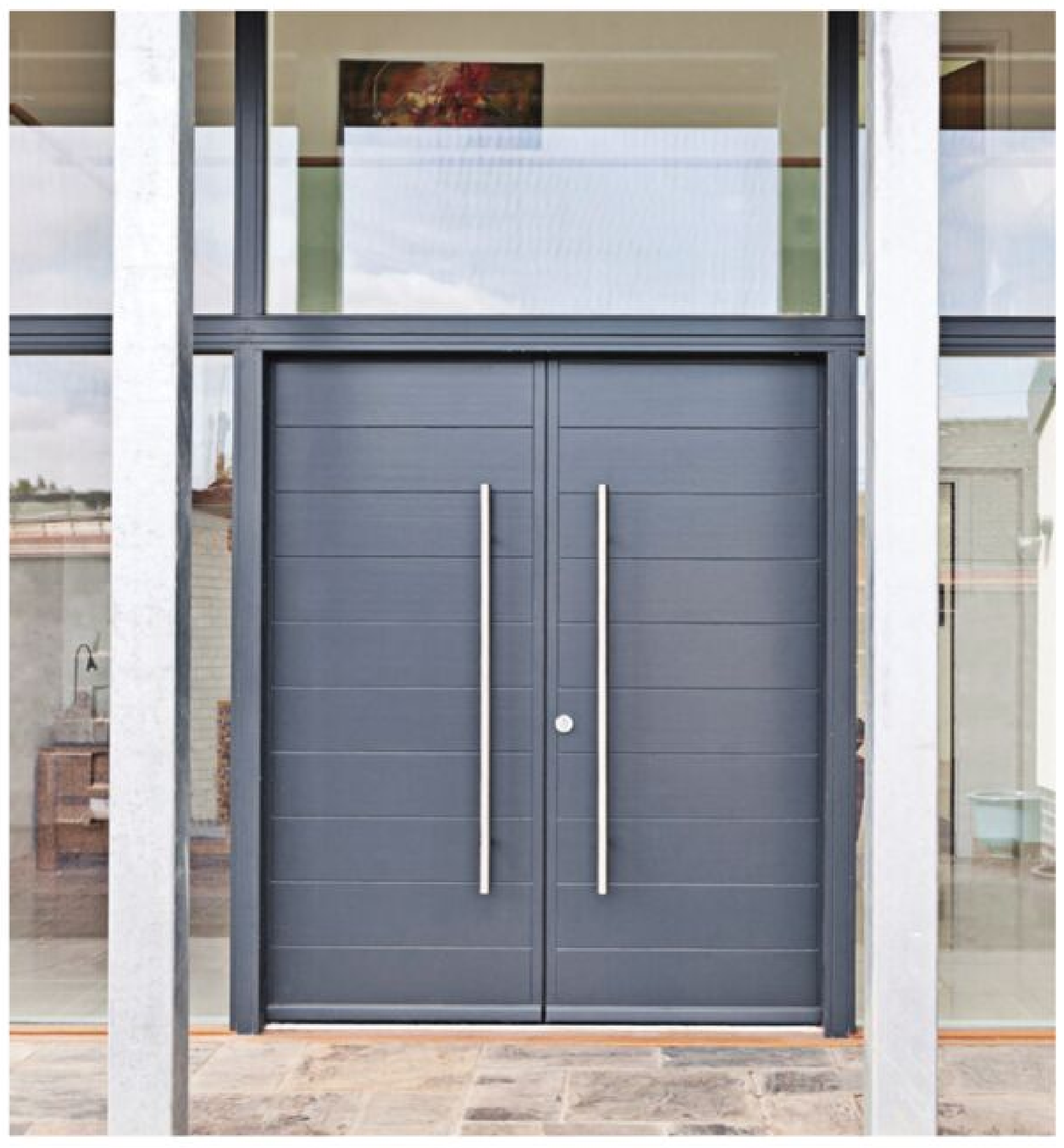
REAL-LIFE PROJECTS

Find out what went into this East London cottage's stylish renovation and extension, which has become a landscape architect's dream home

FRONT DOORS & HALLWAYS

Take a look at our selection of inspiring entrances that'll ensure your self build make a great first impression



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ARCHITECT'S VIEW

Co-director of Office S&M, **Hugh McEwen** explores the key considerations for incorporating colour into your design to create a unique, eye-catching home

Developing your colour scheme

When should you start thinking about the colour palette for your project?

It is better to think about including colour in your design right at the start of your build journey. This doesn't mean that you must choose a set scheme or be fixed on where you want exact shades to be used within the structure, but it needs to be part of the discussion from the outset to ensure the design and palette evolve organically together and complement one another.

When you first get started, try to think about how you want a space to make you feel when you're in it. Would you like a certain room to be warm and cosy or bright and fresh, for instance? Then you can begin to look at colours and tones that create the kind of atmosphere you're after. Similarly, consider how you'd like the space to be perceived – do you want it to feel bigger or narrower? Would you like one room to have multiple functions so need to delineate the space somehow? Having these intentions in mind at the outset will help the design and colour schemes develop naturally alongside each other to create your ideal space.

Are there any planning rules to be aware of?

Generally, there aren't restrictions around using colour in your design, as planning isn't as prescriptive as you may think. However, this doesn't mean there won't be questions from a case officer.

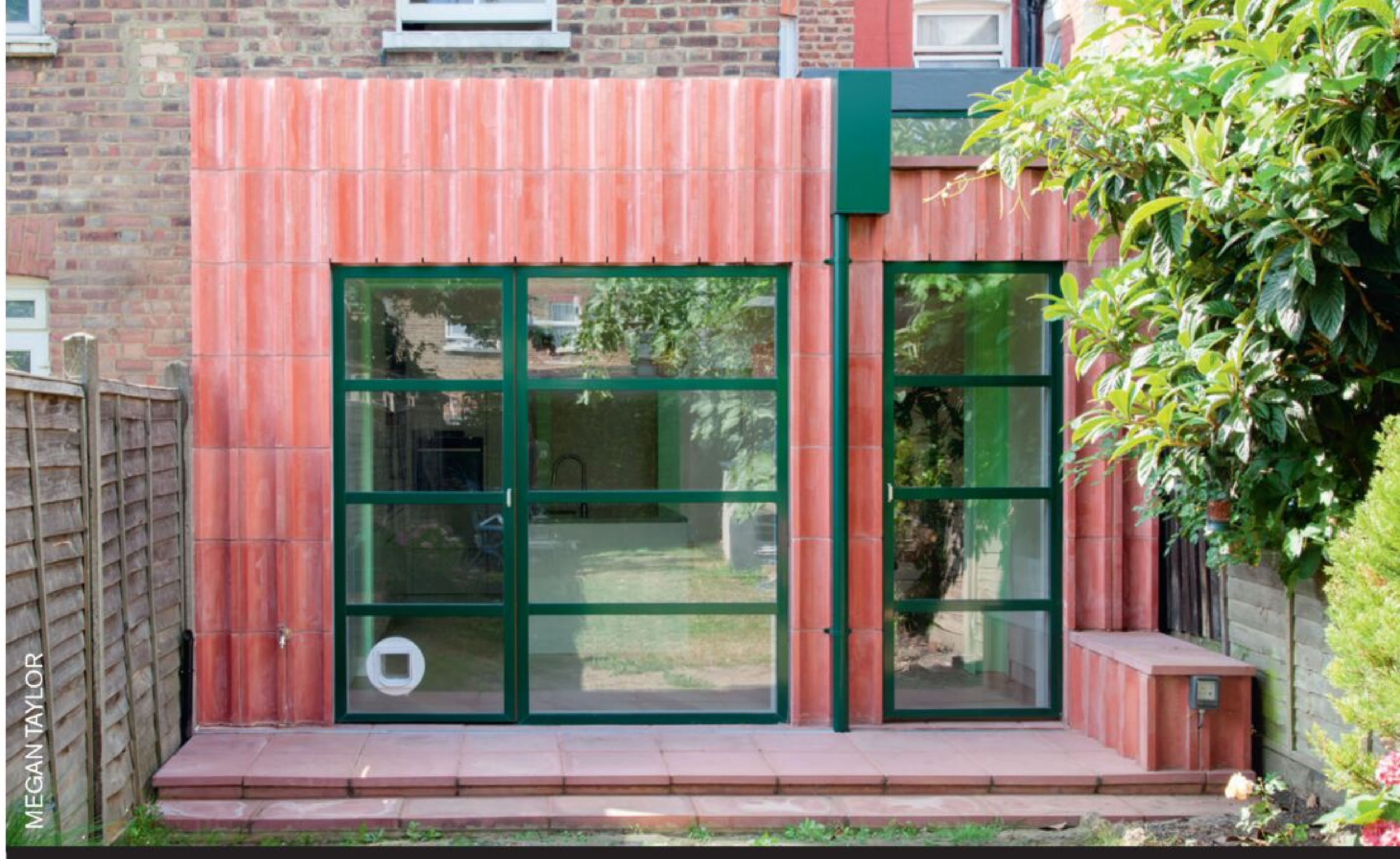
There are more limitations for buildings that are listed or in conservation areas, so take a thorough look at your local planning policies if you are in those locations. Lots of historic buildings are very vibrant, especially Victorian architecture, which tends to be heavily polychromatic, so explore the precedence for your area as you could use these historic colourings in your new design.

How should you get started on developing the right scheme to suit your home's style?

Creating a colour palette is a helpful way of incorporating a range of tones into your project in a structured fashion. Try to come up with three or four main colours and look at how they can work together. Then, decide on the best option for large expanses of walls or flooring and select the shades that would work best for small touches such as doorhandles. A hierarchy can help you make decisions on which parts of the structure you want to accentuate and makes it easier when you start buying materials to know exactly what works within your personalised scheme.

Personally, I don't think that you can go overboard with colour but I would advise you to remember to think about your project as a whole and build your scheme up gradually.

Testing out your choices is also a vital part of finalising the perfect colour scheme. Making swatches and ordering samples will help you see exactly how each material or shade looks in person, in your chosen setting. Try painting samples onto wallpaper that you can easily move around so you can see the colour at a decent scale. If you're taking on a renovation or extension project, externally, you can experiment by painting existing windows or doors which are going to be replaced, to get a feel for what they would look like in situ.



Created using pigmented concrete, this dynamic rear extension design by Office S&M features a beautiful combination of vibrant colours. The contrasting palette and ridged texture to the facade generate shadows adding a playful visual appeal to the exterior and creating depth and character

How can sunlight and weathering affect your exterior colour choices over time?

The sunlight composition of your plot is important to consider. There are two types of light to take into account – south and north. Southerly light is very warm and bright and creates harsh shadows on a structure, whereas light from the north has a bluer tone and is much softer, which prevents as many shadows.

Once you have explored the different levels of each type of light that your property picks up, you can experiment with how colour works in relation. For example, for entirely north-facing spaces you can integrate more texture and add richer, deeper tones into the structure to provide warmth and an additional dimension. For south-facing properties, glazed tiles work very well in reflecting the bold sunlight onto the surrounding garden to illuminate the space. Take some time to investigate, using swatches and samples externally to see how your chosen colours and materials respond to the specific lighting on your site.

Nowadays, most colours won't fade due to weathering. If you have a painted finish on a south-facing area that's exposed to lots of UV then this can start to diminish in vibrancy, but you may find it develops into something more like a baked-in colour. Glazed tiles and metal finishes are highly unlikely to degrade over time.

Is it more expensive to create a colourful structure compared to a neutral finish?

Most of the time you'll spend the same amount of money, no matter the colour. Materials tend to be finished in a paint anyway, or the hue is part of the substance such as in renders or concrete, so by asking for an alternative shade you are just adjusting the pigment. Paint is also used for protecting timber or steel from fire, for example, so why not take the opportunity to opt for a splash of colour?

There is an assumption that having something slightly different from the norm means it will cost more, but this isn't the case. A lot of the time the biggest issue is a client's lack of confidence. So many people wonder if they include bold shades, will it make their house harder to sell down the line? But you should design something that's unique to you and a space that you'll love living in everyday.

Hugh McEwan is the director at Office S&M Architects, where he leads on collaboration with architectural teams, oversees best practice in housing design and provides planning policy advice on infill housing around London. For more information call **020 8106 6855** or visit **www.officesandm.com**

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